



GOD OF MUSIC

BOOK 01

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God of Music

(음악의 신)

by

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Synopsis

A minus's hand that fails every singer he put his hands on, Kang Yoon.

He meets his death after being chased by loan sharks, losing his beloved sister and his everyday life.

However, with those 10 years earned through coincidence...

In his new life, he will walk the path to the best planner.

3rd rate or 1st rate, through his hands, they will become legend!!

Acknowledgement

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Chapter 0: Intro

“Excuse me, Customer Lee KangYoon? When are you going to pay us back?”

“.....”

Big men with wide shoulders and sturdy backs surrounded me. They were all holding long metal pipes and baseball bats, with cruel expressions. One of those men placed his face in front of me, and he held out his hand.

“It’s the third month already, sir Lee KangYoon. I don’t even remember when was it that you said you were going to pay the interest?”

“Just this time... Just let me go this time, then I...”

“Hahahaha. That, sir customer, won’t do. Is this the first time you have taken out a loan? Hello? The interest you owe us is now over 30 million! 30 f*cking million won (≈ 26000 USD)! Do you know what happens if you get any more, our dear customer?”

“What, last month it was just 10 million, how can it become 30...?”

“You don’t even know our way of calculating, huh? We can’t leave empty handed today. Boys, get him.”

They were ruthless.

Of course, they didn’t touch a single hair on my head.

However...

“No, NO! Not that!!”

“Hey, I told you we couldn’t leave empty handed today, right? What do you think you’re doing!?”

The big man roughly pushed me out of the way. I crashed into the desk; taking that opportunity, the loan sharks took every

document they could, such as the building contract. They could use this to earn money.

“No!! You b*tches! I said not that!!”

“This guy...”

Regardless of whether it was a desk or a chair, they broke everything. I even clung to their legs, but the smashing didn't rest. They kept pushing and pulling me around. Still, it was good that I didn't get a bat-massage. However, they already made my heart into a mess.

“Hmm. This should just about cover the interest. Customer Lee KangYoon, we will meet next month. Let's go, boys.”

The loan sharks came and went away like a tide, and I was left alone in the office. Being left alone in this messy office made me feel like I was falling into the pits of hell.

“...F*ck them all!!!”

In the empty office, I screamed like a madman.

The sorrow filled the office.

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Due to the loan sharks having taken away the deposit money, I was kicked out of the office; I had nowhere to go. I even invested the money that I was going to use to buy my house, but the loan that I used, due to low funds, was a source of calamity.

Out of the frying pan and into the fire – perhaps this was that kind of situation?

“President, I will quit being a singer...”

“What, why are you even like that, YunHee? You should work hard and become successful.”

“I trusted you until now, and I even tumbled around for two years. However, not to mention getting onto the charts, I didn’t even get to have a proper event. To spend my time like this, I’d rather have gone to university and learnt music properly. There was no cancellation fee in the contract, so there’s no problem, right?”

YunHee, the last singer I had, had left me. The other employees were the same. Well, who would want to work with a president who couldn’t even pay them properly?

Without an office or a house, there’s no where I could go to. I just walked without any purpose. At this rate, the loan sharks would probably want to sell my organs by the next month; however, I have already given up on myself. Fine, such is fate....

“Excuse me, young man.”

However, when I was walking without purpose, I heard someone call to me.

“What is it, sir?”

“I am hungry, but I have no money; can you buy me rice and soup?”

A homeless person spoke to me. Usually, I wouldn’t even glance at him, but I subconsciously put my hand into my pocket for some reason. Is my end nigh? When I searched my pocket, a piece of paper could be felt. I took it out, and it was a piece of green paper. (10000 KRW note \approx 8.70 USD)

Yeah. What the hell can I do with this?

I held out the 10000 Won note to the homeless man

Then, the homeless man’s eyes widened.

“Thanks, I will be able to buy a meal of rice and soup with this.”

The homeless man repeatedly gave thanks, and in the end, ran away with vigor. They say homeless people are only full of energy

when borrowing a cigar, but this person was a bit unusual. The fact that my pocket just became empty didn't stir me at all for some reason, and I just turned around

However, I then heard someone calling out to me again.

"Excuse me, young man."

Looking back, it was the same old man.

"By chance, do you want anything? I almost forgot because I was frantic."

What would I want from a homeless man?

I said that I was alright and smiled it off.

"Don't be like that, tell me anything you want. I will do anything."

"Pfft."

Those words made me laugh. What was this homeless man saying? Well, yeah, could he give me anything or do anything at all? Could he get me out of this hell? I laughed at myself for thinking that.

"I just, want to start again, I guess. From the beginning."

"That's your wish?"

"Yeah. If I could start again, I feel like I wouldn't fail... It's just nonsense. Now then, please enjoy your meal."

I subconsciously grumbled at the homeless man who seemed delighted with just a 10000 Won note. How good would it be if I could start it over again? Minus; if I could change this nickname of 'minus's hand.'

Seven years as a manager. During that time, I made many acquaintances, gathered money, and became a planner. Planning for a singer was creating something from nothing, and it was fun. In the beginning, I achieved big success, so I smoothly changed

from a manager to a planner. However, the problem came after that.

After I became a planner in a big management company, I was put in charge of a big group. It was a 5-man group of singers, and they achieved success with their 4th album. When it was time for the 5th, I was put in charge of them. However, the result was a huge failure. Not only that, the members fought with the company, and a scandal between one of its members and one of their fans happened. All of this came together, and the result was that it ended up with the group disbanding. I was unlucky, but the important thing was that the 5th album had failed.

The problem became even bigger after that. From new singers to middle-tier singers, the misfortune didn't end. I failed every single album I put my hands on. The middle-tier singers, who had never failed before, even became rash and ruined their name. This continued for three years.

That was how I got the nickname 'minus's hand.' In the end, it was no different from being buried in this industry. Even so, with all of my effort, I gathered all of the money possible, from loans to debts, and planned a singer, but the result was that there was, even more, debt, the singer left, and I'm now unemployed...

"Whew, is it going to be over like this?"

I put a cigar I picked up from the road in my mouth, and I stood on Mapo bridge. This was called the 'sacred place' for people who gave up on themselves. No confidence, no motivation... The only route was this way – such was their thinking.

However, if I give up here, then my little sister...?

"HeeYoon..."

I tried calling my sister's name out loud. However, the echoless Han river was emotionless. Who would look after my little sister, who had to undergo dialysis for her entire life, if I am gone? I stood

on Mapo bridge, but I didn't even manage to get up on the railing.

I couldn't die even if I wanted to die; and, even if I wanted to live, there is no way. What do I do?

Tears uncontrollably flowed from my eyes.

Ziiiiiiiin—

Suddenly, my phone started ringing. A phone call nowadays could only be from loan sharks, my only friend, or HeeYoon. However, this number is unknown... Wait, this is the hospital number.

“Hello?!”

[Are you Ms. Lee HeeYoon's guardian?]

“Yes, I am. So?”

[Ms. HeeYoon's condition is serious right now. She missed her dialysis period by a lot, and she collapsed...]

My head instantly turned white. I couldn't think of anything else. HeeYoon, her condition was serious!

The fastest route, right now, was a taxi. The direction was the other side. Then I have to cross the road. The crossing was far away. However, I crossed the road here due to being frantic.

Screeeeeeeeeeech—!! Craaaaaaaaash!!

In the middle of the road, I was hit by a giant truck and flew up in the sky. In front of my eyes, something went past like a panorama. It was that something like you seeing your life passing by in a flash. I knew then that I would die like this...

‘Is this the end? Then what about HeeYoon? HeeYoon..... Ah, no... It can't end like this...!’

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Sirens wailing

The ambulance was dashing through the road, towards the hospital.

“Blood pressure going down!”

“Use the defibrillator! Quickly!!”

The inside of the ambulance was frantic. The lowering frequency of heartbeats and the efforts of the emergency doctors were tear-jerking. However, whether he knew it or not, KangYoon’s breath was getting dimmer.

‘If... If I could just... start again...’

Piiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii— (T/N: His heart rate line turned flat)

KangYoon’s hands dropped towards the ground, and for him, time was disappearing just like that.

Chapter 1: To Ten Years In The Past...(1)

“Oppa, oppa.”

“...Umm...”

“Oppa, oppa!!”

“...Ahh... Just a little more...”

KangYoon was tired. The hand which was shaking him was getting stronger, but his heavy eyelids showed no signs of opening.

“Ah, geez!! Oppa!!”

In the end, after a shout, he barely opened his eyes.

“Yawn... Oh... So noisy. I said just a little more...”

“Oh geez. You said you had an interview, and you told me to wake you up early.”

“Yeah whatever... Interview... Interview... What? Interview??”

After hearing an important word, KangYoon felt his head go blank. After kicking the thick blanket covering him, KangYoon stood up abruptly and looked around.

“This is... my room.”

“Where else is it if it’s not your room? Wake up. You gotta eat breakfast.”

“You... HeeYoon? You’re HeeYoon?”

KangYoon finally saw the apron-wearing lady who was looking at him. With a tall height and a paler face than others around the same age, it was his little sister, HeeYoon.

“HeeYoon!! You are alive!!”

“Huh? Oppa, why are you like this?!”

KangYoon hugged HeeYoon strongly after thinking that she was safe. HeeYoon tried to shake him off in confusion; however, she

found her brother, who was even crying, a bit strange, and she left him to his own vice.

After a long while, KangYoon calmed down, and he let go of HeeYoon.

“Oppa, why are you like this? You seem like you’ve seen a dead person?”

“The hospital! Weren’t you in the hospital?”

“I was discharged yesterday. You were even with me. You said let’s change to the regular treatment.”

What does this mean? KangYoon didn’t even begin to understand. The hospital clearly said that she was in a serious condition. After being contacted, he hurried to the hospital. He tried crossing the wide Mapo bridge, and then he was hit by a truck...

‘What happened?’

KangYoon finally felt that something was off. He first stared at his own sister’s face. The paler face, compared to others around her age, was still there, but her age seemed a little too young.

“There, there, my dear brother. Stop looking at my face. I cooked breakfast for you, so you gotta eat it deliciously right?”

“.....”

“Oppa?”

“Y-yeah. I will be there after I wash up.”

KangYoon headed to the toilet right after he let HeeYoon go. Even pouring cold water onto his face, he didn’t grasp what was happening. Healthy, no. His little sister becoming younger and an interview... He didn’t know what was what.

After washing his face, he went to the living room. The first thing he saw was the calendar hanging on the wall.

‘July 2007? Not 2017?! Is the calendar wrong?’

KangYoon rubbed his eyes, and he looked again; however, it wasn’t wrong. He lived and died with the entertainment world. He was meticulous in organizing calendars. The calendar was packed full of the schedule he wrote there.

‘MG Planning Team interview. 11 AM? Wait, I had this interview 10 years ago, though?’

KangYoon finally felt that something big was happening. He got through the MG Entertainment interview, and he entered the company; however, the singer he planned for failed miserably, and he even got his hands on marijuana. He had to take responsibility and leave the company; his memory of that was very clear in his mind.

He became bitter when he thought of that failure.

“Oppa, come and eat!!”

While he was in thought, he heard HeeYoon calling him from the kitchen.

“I’m coming!”

KangYoon changed his clothes, and he walked towards the living room.

“In the– beautiful world–”

HeeYoon was singing while she boiled the soup. The sound of the soup boiling and the cutting sounds on the cutting board was filling the room. But...

‘Wh... What is this? This light?’

In front of him, an amazing scene was taking place. HeeYoon was surrounded by light. The hazy white light came out of HeeYoon, and it filled the kitchen. KangYoon was scared out of his wits, seeing this sight that was like magic.

‘What is this!! Th... This is?!’

Perhaps it was a halo. KangYoon doubted his own eyes. He rubbed his eyes, and he looked again. However, the white light from HeeYoon didn't disappear at all, and it was filling the kitchen with faint light.

“Oppa, let's eat.”

Then, something even more amazing happened. The light disappeared instantly when the singing ended.

“Yeah... What?”

“Oppa? What is it?”

“N-No. I seem to be seeing things.”

“Oppa, you're being strange today. Did you have a nightmare or something?”

Normally, he would sit and lift his spoon; however, today he was staring at her, so it was no wonder that she felt it was strange.

“No. Let's eat!”

However, instead of telling her his thoughts, KangYoon lifted his spoon. Speaking to HeeYoon about it would make her treat him like a freak. Of course, the inside of his head was chaos itself.

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‘This is 10 years in the past. I died, I returned to the past, and now I'm seeing strange things.’

After his sister went to school, KangYoon sorted the situation in his room. His mind could not comprehend this situation at all. To think that he had returned to 10 years in the past. It was hard to accept. However, he could only accept that it was 10 years in the past after looking at the president's policies, entertainment stories, and internet articles.

‘Then, what is it that I'm seeing?’

The light that HeeYoon was giving off. He couldn't begin to

understand what it was. To think that a person would give off light. It was something that he should report to the ‘Wonders of the World’ TV programme.

However, worrying about it wouldn’t lead him to a solution, and so he didn’t look for any answers.

‘Oh, the interview!’

It was good etiquette to arrive 10 minutes earlier to an interview. For an 11 AM interview, he had to leave now. KangYoon neatly wore his suit, sorted his figure, and he left the house.

The MG Entertainment office building was located in something like the silicon valley for entertainment companies. Due to it being located in the most famous street of Gangnam, there were models along with celebrities walking on the streets; street performances were common.

“Lie– Lie– Look back at me—”

KangYoon was walking past the street when he found a lady who was performing on the street. The figure of her focusing on singing with a guitar strapped around her made the passersby gather around her. He was curious as to what the people were looking at, so he went to take a look.

‘Huh... What is this? This light is...?’

In front of him, the light appeared again. Faint white light was spreading out from the singing lady. From the guitar also came out blue light, it melded into the white light, and the white light grew stronger.

“The song’s good.”

“She’s performing well.”

The reactions of the public was also alright. Tens of people gathered around her, and they praised her singing. From time to time, people put a 1000 Won note and, sometimes, even a 10000

Won note. As the singing reached its climax, the light grew even stronger. The light, in the end, engulfed the crowd that was listening.

‘What is this? Don’t tell me, it’s caused by singing?’

HeeYoon gave off light in the morning when she was singing. The singing lady in front of him, right now, was also giving off light. KangYoon grew absent minded after seeing the white light growing stronger as it melded into the peoples’ bodies.

“Thank you!!”

After the song ended, the light given off by the lady disappeared; it was as if it was a mirage, disappearing just as his focus neared. However, the light from the singing still shone on the people who were listening. The light disappeared slowly after some time.

KangYoon now understood what the identity of that light was, to an extent.

‘This is singing! Singing!! The light is something like the influence that people get from music.’

KangYoon tapped his knee without realizing it. He didn’t know why he could see singing as light. However, he no longer feared this strange phenomenon.

‘I will be late to the interview. Let’s go.’

Because he was listening to the singing, he was running out of time.

KangYoon hurried towards MG Entertainment.

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“Mr. Lee KangYoon. Born in 1978; that means you’re 30 this year. In the previous company, you were the chief planner for the singer, Julia.”

“That is right.”

MG Entertainment office, 7th floor conference room. There, KangYoon was interviewed by four interviewers. They were facing each other, and tension flowed in the room.

“Julia was prepared ambitiously by GTH Entertainment, but you barely crossed the break-even point. There was no news of her since then.”

“.....”

The one speaking was the one in the middle wearing a hat. He kept poking where it hurt.

“In this field, career experience directly relates to ability. If you come to us with those failing experiences, then would we be able to trust you in planning?”

The questions were sharp, but KangYoon was calm.

‘Producer Oh JiWan. As expected, he’s asking the same questions.’

The current questioner was Producer Oh JiWan, MG Entertainment’s representing producer.

He was known for being picky, but his producing was great; even between singers, he was known for being a producer that’s worthy of trust. The only downside was that he was not affectionate to anyone.

“You are right. From the company’s perspective, Julia was a failure. However, she was also the singer who provided the opportunity to plan for other singers by crossing the break-even point in just one year. She didn’t rise high, but she provided us with an opportunity. If you trust me and give me work, then, even if I fail, there would be no loss in any way.”

Companies are sensitive to money. If the planned singer rose high, that was alright; however, to do that, they needed to break through countless variables. Crossing the break-even point was not easy. KangYoon appealed this point.

“No losses. Stability-wise, it’s alright. Then, let’s move on to the next question. I believe that you know of our situation in the company very well. Our main male singer group, Epis, is borderline disbanding while our female group, Sereny, disbanded; also, our solo singer, Yeon JooAh, is experiencing difficulties due to the confusion in the Planner Team. Mr. KangYoon, if you were the supervisor, then how would you overcome this crisis?”

From the woman in a suit from the furthest right, a long and difficult question flew at him.

“May I have some time to think?”

“Yes. Is one minute alright with you?”

“Of course.”

For a brief moment, silence flowed in the interview room.

‘In the end, Epis was disbanded because the members had different thoughts; the members went solo, but the reaction wasn’t that good. The members of Sereny all contracted with other companies. Amongst them, the least famous of them all, Herry, hit it big doing musicals; she exceeded all the other members. I heard MG Entertainment was stabbed in the back. Yeon JooAh, as an active singer for 10 years, she intended to debut in Japan first, then go to America; however, the company wanted her to step on to America directly and confusion ensued. In the end, JooAh went to Japan and hit it big, but there was not much of a reaction in America.’

Sorting out the past, he now knew how to answer this question.

“First, I will start with the problem with Epis.”

“Go on.”

The woman in the suit crossed her arms. She had a ‘I’ll listen to your answer for a bit’ reaction. It was an attitude that only appeared in people with high positions.

“There is a lot of friction in between the members of Epis. Everyone has their own musical ambition. The company misses the fandom and synergy effect when they get together; thus, they are unable to let go. However, in my opinion, we should let them go.”

“What’s your reason?”

“Of course, there will be profit even if the re-contract is done. However, the re-contract money will be high, so, even if you re-contract all the members, the profit will be small. The members of Epis all want to work solo, and they don’t have much interest in working as a group. The company re-contracting them will only bring losses.”

“Hmm... Even so, can’t we force them to work as a group in the contract?”

“Not at all.”

KangYoon strongly refuted the words of the woman in the suit.

“They already achieved success once. That won’t work even if we provide them with a lot of money. If we force them to do what they don’t want, then they won’t do it. It’s better to let them go or contract them one by one.”

“Good, next.”

“The next is Sereny. As far as I know, Juri of Sereny already has more interest in marriage rather than the entertainment industry. It would be hard to hold onto her as she dreams of having a stable family.”

“.....”

“Hami, she has interest in acting. However, as you know, she is already known for her terrible acting. To straighten it out, a lot of time will be necessary. Finally...”

“Wait.”

KangYoon was speaking when a casual clothed man on the far left interrupted him.

“What is the reason for your confidence in saying this?”

At that moment, KangYoon panicked. All of this, he knew because it already happened in the future; however, that person was asking for the source of information. It was a sharp question. However, in the end, KangYoon calmly resumed his answer.

“I was in this field for a long time. It was a prediction based on rumors.”

“...Is that so. Continue.”

It should have made him panic, but, seeing KangYoon reply so calmly, the man didn't speak anymore.

“I think JooAh should start being active in Japan first. First, JooAh's style is one that gets through in Japan. Her age is 18. However, her skills are already top-tier. In Japan, idols around her age have a showdown in looks. If it is JooAh, someone who has both looks and ability, it will definitely work. My answer concludes here.”

KangYoon's answer ended. The interviewers gathered and spoke to each other. KangYoon calmly waited for new questions.

In the end. The casual clothed man spoke.

“You said that the things you spoke now were based on rumors, right?”

“Yes.”

“...Hm. You have good skills. I think we under-evaluated this man called Lee KangYoon.”

KangYoon rejoiced in his heart. He answered differently than last time. However, the reactions were great.

“This level of information network and adaptability, and if you really have the skills in planning like you said, then I think you

would definitely be able to use your ability to the fullest here. Good. Then the last question.”

“Please speak.”

“Suppose you’re a team leader, and you make a plan for JooAh.”

“Where’s the stage?”

“Japan.”

A question that he never heard ten years ago came at him. KangYoon needed to think this over calmly.

‘JooAh had no relations to me in any way...’

She was a famous star. However, in KangYoon’s past, he didn’t even see her properly once. To plan for a top star 10 years ago, KangYoon’s heart thumped just thinking about it.

“Please give me time to think.”

“I will wait.”

KangYoon pondered for a bit. If he was going to do it, then do it big, on a big, wide stage; he should make her have fun. After confirming his thoughts, he calmly started replying.

“The dance that JooAh has the most confidence in is popping. Popping for the dance, and little to no electronic sound for the song... Music Station for the debut stage would be great. I’ll know better if I receive the songs, but currently, this is all I can think of.”

As a music broadcast by the Japanese Asai TV, Music Station was one of the biggest music broadcasters in Japan. The problem was that they never allowed foreign singers to stand on it.

“Oh. Music Station, you say. Was there a precedence where they allowed a foreign singer to stand on it?”

“I think that’s why we should try it. ‘Our singer is worthy to stand on that stage. Let her try’. Then we prove it to them. My

view is that Planners should be responsible to create that opportunity.”

Bang!!

The man smashed on the desk hard.

“Good. I’ll be honest with you. There was no-one who answered as refreshingly as you. Last question. If I let you run that plan for JooAh, will you be able to bring to me that refreshing answer again?”

“Chairman!!”

“Chairman!!”

Chaos ensued amongst the interviewers. His straight-ball reaction made many people stand up abruptly.

‘Plan for the singer, JooAh?’

If it went as it did in the past, he would be assigned the four man singer group who were trying to do their 5th album, fail, and then leave the company.

KangYoon could hear his heart thumping at the amazing opportunity he made for himself.

‘JooAh’s Japan stage? This...’

Even imagining it made his heart thump. He was also worried about the risk of failure. However, the risk of failure was incomparable to the one in his past. However, all of this fear...

‘I will absolutely succeed!!’

KangYoon’s fear couldn’t win over his own eagerness.

Fail, fail, FAIL!! For KangYoon, who was sick and tired of the countless failures in his past, this was an opportunity to leap. He decided.

“Yes. It’s possible.”

KangYoon grabbed onto that opportunity.

“Chairman!! This won’t do. How can...”

“Chairman!!”

Of course there will be chaos since he let a newbie take charge of a huge project. However, the chairman waved all the complaints, and he held his hand out to KangYoon.

“Please take care of me from now on. Team Leader Lee KangYoon.”

“Please take care of me too. Chairman.”

The casual clothed man, Chairman of MG Entertainment, Won JinMoon and KangYoon, grabbed each other’s hands.

And that’s how KangYoon’s first planning project started.

It was the start of the first planning project by KangYoon, who would later be hailed as the Midas’s hand... no, the God of Music.

Chapter 2: To Ten Years In The Past...(2)

‘This unbelievable thing actually...’

Leaving the MG Entertainment office building, KangYoon couldn’t hide his smile. Originally, he would become a ‘Team Member’ for a failed singer. Now, he’s in charge of JooAh. And the topmost position of ‘Planning Team Leader’ at that!!

‘Was there this kind of cronyism? Hahaha!!’

Due to not being able to hold back his laughter, the supermarket owner looked at him as if he was looking at a crazy man, but KangYoon wasn’t bothered.

Instead, he showed good manners by buying coffee and cigarettes.

KangYoon lit a cigarette in a secluded alley.

Normally, cigarettes didn’t suit his tastes but today, it felt strangely good.

Looking at the dispersing smoke, he felt that all of the fatigue today was being relieved.

“Excuse me.”

While he was wallowing in delight, there was someone who approached him. It was a tall girl in a school uniform.

“What is it?”

“Excuse me, but can you light me one?”

KangYoon fell into confusion. A female student in a school skirt was asking him to light her one. He was dumbfounded since he had a little sister.

“I don’t have any.”

“I just saw you putting it in your pocket.”

The girl confidently pointed towards KangYoon’s pocket.

KangYoon could only deeply sigh, and he looked at her acting as if she was getting back something she lent.

“I do have one, but I don’t have any to give to a student. I don’t think this is right.”

“...If you don’t want to, then you should just say so, there is no need to preach me right?”

The girl complained.

KangYoon blinked his eyes at those rough words.

And so, he was about to scold her when he blinked continuously, looking at her familiar face.

‘Wait. Isn’t this girl Jung MinAh? From EDDIOS?’

She looked younger than the Jung MinAh he knew of, but it was definitely her.

The group with 7 girls, EDDIOS was a group which had a thick fan base due to each members’ individuality. There was a strong fan base and the songs were good too, but due to the bad relationships between its members, there were rumors about their discord and in the end, they would disband. Jung MinAh, with a tall height and a vibrant expression, boasted popularity between both the male and the female populace.

KangYoon was about to pass it off as being unlucky, but he thought that it wouldn’t be right to just leave a member of EDDIOS, who was once the big star in the world of singers. Moreover, they would work for the same company in the future.

“You, aren’t you a trainee of MG Entertainment?”

“Who are you to concern yourself with whether I am or am not one?”

“A cigarette when you’re a trainee. You’re not even a successful singer. What are you doing?”

“Like I said, who are you to stick your nose into this?”

Jung MinAh came out strongly. Her personality was originally one that hated to lose. However, KangYoon also wasn't someone who would smoothly pass this by.

"I originally had no relations with you, but I do now. I'm an employee in MG Entertainment. You are Jung MinAh right?"

"You know me?"

"I know very well. You are talented in dancing and you are a unofficially trainee that decided to be put in the next girl group. Are you relieving yourself just because you were put in there? You're even smoking."

"....."

Jung MinAh was mad. It was because there was not a single thing wrong with what KangYoon was saying. No, it pricked her because he knew too well. Moreover, to say he was in the same company... If he knew who the trainees were, then it was likely that he leaned more towards field work rather than paperwork. Jung MinAh couldn't continue speaking.

"To pop the champagne so early is bad. For a trainee, it starts for real when you become a si-"

"I was dropped."

However, an answer that was completely out of KangYoon's expectations flew at him.

"I was pushed out from the next girl group. Satisfied? If you aren't going to light me one, then please go away."

KangYoon panicked in his own way. This kind of past, he never heard of.

'Jung MinAh was dropped? No way. Then did she get dropped once and get selected again?'

KangYoon's head spun rapidly. As far as he knew, it was the season when MG Entertainment was preparing its next groups. It

was a period where trainees sweated beads to get selected for the next girl group and boy group. But Jung MinAh was dropped? He didn't know that such a past existed.

“Why were you dropped?”

“I tripped in the selection audition. I was scolded a lot with words like ‘are you going to be like this in practice too’ and the like. And was dropped. HAHAAH!!”

Jung MinAh didn't understand why she was explaining all of this to him. However, she was doing whatever she liked. Whatever her heart compelled her to do.

“I won't get in with my singing, so, I should just light one to get rid of the stuffiness. If you aren't going to light me one...”

“Then are you going to end it like this? Is this the end?”

“Hey!!”

Finally, Jung MinAh shouted. But the thing she showed were tears. Tears filled with sorrow and anger.

“What are you, [ahjussi](#), to... me... why are you...”

ahjussi means something like ‘old man’. It's similar to ‘ossan’ or ‘oji-san’ in JP.

“.....”

Puberty would always produce ups and downs in emotions. Perhaps it's due to the overflowing emotions? Or perhaps it was due to the piled up stress? Jung MinAh started crying sorrowfully. KangYoon, who was getting angry at her, panicked for a bit before tapping her shoulders.

“It's just once. And in MG Entertainment, Jung MinAh, how many can hold a candle to you in dancing? This is not the decisive factor.”

“.....”

“Try again, and you can definitely do it. Alright?”

Jung MinAh felt strange. This was definitely the first time she saw him. And she was scolded and even consoled by such a person. It was the first time something like this happened.

“.....”

“.....”

For a moment, silence flowed. Jung MinAh, who controlled her emotions, raised her eyes, which were red.

“...Thank you. Nobody believed in me like this before.”

“Oh, really?”

“Thank you, even if it’s just empty words. I just... needed some consolation, I guess. This has never happened before... Ha. It’s funny.”

Perhaps she also felt that it was funny, but Jung MinAh showed an awkward smile. However, KangYoon spoke with confidence.

“It’s not empty words. It’s based on many sources. You will definitely become a singer. A big one at that.”

“.....”

“So don’t go ruining your body with something like cigarettes and start again. Alright? Don’t ruin your body.”

“.... Yes.”

Finally, Jung MinAh smiled a proper smile. Of course, the tears and the smudged makeup made her face a mess, but her unique beauty didn’t go away.

“Ayyy. This was one of the things I enjoyed.”

“Stop it. Your lung capacity will drop.”

“Ok. I’ll try stopping, but I don’t even know your name. Who are you, ahjussi?”

They spoke as if they were close friends until now, but she didn't even know his name. Jung MinAh was curious about him. He had an ordinary impression, but his eyes had unusual depth and his body had strength.

"I'm Lee KangYoon. We will eat from the same pot from now on, so please take care of me."

"Me too. What's your department?"

"Heh, that's a secret."

"Whaat? Tch, being childish."

KangYoon and Jung MinAh became friendly in no time and were talking without holding anything back.

It was the first meeting between Jung MinAh, whose name would shake the world as MG Entertainment's girl group's core, and KangYoon.

.

After returning home, KangYoon was pondering about the light from the singing.

'It doesn't appear through the TV or computer videos, huh.'

He concluded that it only appeared when he looked at the performance directly. If that was so, then how should he use this? KangYoon fell into thought.

'Returning to the past is an amazing miracle in itself, but to think that I would 'see' singing. Why did I become able to see it? Perhaps it was due to that homeless man?'

He finally remembered that he handed a 10000 Won note to a homeless man who said he was hungry.

[Tell me anything you want. I will grant them all.]

Incomprehensible stuff that he will grant them all. KangYoon wanted to start over. And those words became reality. With an

incomprehensible strange ability to boot. No matter how much he thought about it, that could be the only reason.

It became night, but KangYoon didn't turn on the light in his room. He wanted to sort out his thoughts.

'I returned to 10 years in the past and I gained an ability to 'see' singing. And today, I changed the original future.'

He was put in charge of JooAh, a top-tier singer, and not the singer he was originally assigned. He even got acquainted with Jung MinAh, who he never had any interactions with before. KangYoon was satisfied with the results of his hard work. However, he was also afraid.

'JooAh's album planning. And in Japan to boot... I was put in charge of a huge project right off the bat. However, if it's the me now...'

He was sick and tired of failing. He didn't even want to think about failing anymore. There was no longer a Lee KangYoon, who was chased by loan sharks while being called the minus's hand, anymore. KangYoon resolved again and again that he would never think of something like failing again.

He started over like how he wanted.

'Yes. I will start over. Again!! I will definitely succeed, and become happy!!'

In the dark room, KangYoon decided on the direction of his future. I will erase something like an unfortunate future here and now. I will make a bright and sparkling future with my own hands – like this.

"Oppa, you there?"

"Oh, yeah. HeeYoon, you're home?"

"What are you doing? It's pitch black. Are you sulking? Kya!! Oppa, what is it!!"

Right at this moment, KangYoon, who tightly hugged his little sister who just came back from school, was happier than anyone else. And I will make this happiness bigger – he decided.

Chapter 3: To Ten Years In The Past...(3)

The dress code for the planning team was casual clothes, but it was laughable to go casual on the first day.

KangYoon wore a suit that fit him perfectly, and he checked various parts while looking at the mirror.

“Is it strange?”

“No, not a bit. My oppa is the best.”

HeeYoon did a thumbs up from behind KangYoon while looking delighted. The long legs and wide shoulders accentuated KangYoon in the suit.

“I’ll go first today. Be careful on your way to school. Today is dialysis day right? Don’t forget.”

“Yeah. Oppa, do your best at work.”

It took a long time for KangYoon, who lived in a poor district on the northern side of the river, to go to a well-known street on the southern side of the river. With him having to ride the bus and the train, commuting to work was difficult.

Using the temporary card key he received, he entered the company and headed straight to the chairman’s office.

“Welcome. I was waiting for you.”

“Good morning, sir.”

Chairman Won JinMoon greeted him nicely. Drinking the tea brought by the secretary, Chairman Won JinMoon spoke.

“So today’s your first day. JooAh will be here in the afternoon so look around the company until then.”

“I understand.”

“I never touch anything after I give someone a task. Instead, if the result is bad...”

Chairman Won JinMoon sliced across his neck.

“Haha. Of course, it’s not like I’m going to kill you for real, so don’t worry.”

“I’ll do my best.”

Looking at Chairman Won JinMoon, who was laughing without restraint, KangYoon thought of his personality.

‘He really doesn’t touch anything after he gives someone work. However, if the result doesn’t satisfy him, there would be severe consequences. Likewise, a good reward would follow from a good result. This was the secret to how Chairman Won JinMoon survived in this industry.’

He always had capable people nearby him. They never felt the need to leave him because they received what they deserved. KangYoon thought that he should learn this point from him. The tea time ended and KangYoon was lead to his office by the secretary. The office was on the 5th floor.

“It’s here.”

At the place where the secretary opened the door was a name tag with the words ‘Team Leader of the Planning and Management Team, Lee KangYoon’. And he had his own room. He was satisfied with the neat table, the resources on the bookshelf, the TV, the computer, and everything else.

“Look around the room until lunch. I will contact you if Miss JooAh comes.”

The secretary went back up to the chairman’s office. KangYoon, who earned free time until lunch, started looking around his office. From the programs in the computer to the album resources, he found the videos of the training room, and snacks too. There was not a single thing missing. He could feel with his skin the position of Planning and Management Team Leader of MG Entertainment.

Looking through some resources, KangYoon opened the video where the trainees were practicing. The video, which was recorded by CCTV, showed trainees undergoing various training, including dance training and vocal training. Looking at those scenes, KangYoon became curious.

‘Shall I have a look?’

They say, ‘strike the iron while it’s hot’, so KangYoon went straight to the training room. It was a training lecture room on the 3rd floor where vocal training was currently being held. KangYoon lightly opened the door and went inside. He saw that there were many youths, in their early teens to the late teens, who were in the middle of listening to the lecture.

“MinSung. I think you are lacking a bit of abdominal strength in that part. Let’s tense up a little bit more.”

“The reason why you can’t help but leave me—”

A male trainee was tensing his abdominal muscles while singing, however...

‘Huh? This time it’s grey.’

From the male trainee, a dull grey was permeating. The dull color made KangYoon crease his eyebrows. It was a color which had a bad feeling to it.

“Han MinSung. That’s not it. You’re too tense. Again!!”

“The reason why you can’t help but leave me—”

Light came out from the trainee again. However, it was still grey. Still, it wasn’t as dull as the previous time.

“MinSung. It’s getting better. Again!!”

“The reason why you can’t help but leave me—”

The grey light became thinner and thinner. KangYoon was curious about this phenomenon. The dull grey thinned out and eventually became white, and the white spread out gently.

“Good!! Just like that. Let’s go to the next part.”

“I love you but—”

Perhaps he grasped onto that feeling, the white light from the male trainee filled the surroundings more and more. When it became white, a good song resounded. The gentle sound, which was spreading to its surrounding, sounded alright.

“Good. Let’s rest for a bit.”

When the resting time came, KangYoon quietly left. This ability to see light, he seems to have grasped it.

‘Good singing spreads white light. The dull grey light, it would be safe to assume that it comes out if the singing is horrible. When the light spreads to others, that person would get affected and react. In the end, what kind of light one produces, or what influence it gives to others – I need to find how this works.’

To see the effects of singing – this was an amazing ability. Good singing and influential singing had differences.

‘Ahh... Dear God...’

KangYoon, for the first time in his life, looked for God and thanked him. He never looked for God in his despair, but now, when he had received the thing he needed the most, he automatically looked for God.

In his new life, God gave him a present which he needed the most.

Viiiin– Viiiin–

At that moment, his phone started ringing.

“Yes. I will be back right away.”

KangYoon went to the chairman’s office after being contacted to come to the chairman’s office since JooAh came.

JooAh, was a singer who had a short height – not even reaching 160 cm – but had long legs and a thin waist – a good body ratio. It was the result of harsh maintenance in her ordinary life. She was still 19. She, who hid her childishness with makeup, suspiciously looked towards KangYoon.

“This is my planning producer?”

“Nice to meet you. My name is Lee KangYoon.”

“.....”

JooAh met KangYoon for the first time, but she didn’t hide her suspicions. She scanned him from top down, and looked towards to the chairman again.

“Chairman. Can’t I just do it with JiWan-oppa?”

“JooAh.”

“You know me. If I do it with a new person, it takes a lot of time. You said that this album will go to Japan. It’s such an important album, but if I need to match with a new person, then how much time would it take? The result is uncertain too.”

It was JooAh’s declaration of I-can’t-do-it-with-this-person. However, Chairman Won JinMoon shook his head.

“JooAh, we decided on this after careful considerations. We chose the person we thought was the most suited to this album, so...”

“Chairman. You know that I never went against you in the past, right? But I don’t understand you this time. You’re tell me to work with a new, unverified person. Did I do something wrong?”

JooAh was really stubborn herself. The album which will be printed in Japan decided her very existence as a singer. But to work with an unverified newbie... She worked for 5 years as a singer, and she was one of the best, so JooAh couldn’t accept it.

However, Chairman Won JinMoon drew the line.

“JooAh. You believe my eyes, right?”

“.....”

“This is the most suitable person for this album. Trust this uncle once and do it.”

“But, uncle...”

“Stop there. I won’t allow any more objections.”

In the end, JooAh could only smack her lips, open the door, and run away. KangYoon bitterly said while looking at the door.

“She doesn’t seem to like me.”

“Hahaha. How is it, Team Leader Lee? JooAh has a stubborn personality. She’s pretty strong to her opinions. Can you topple that stubbornness?”

KangYoon was having fun. A top class singer must have a side like that. He replied without hesitation:

“It’s interesting. A singer must have stubbornness. Please leave it to me.”

“Good, I will trust you. From this moment on, you’re the top person regarding JooAh’s debut in Japan. I will not allow anyone to touch anything. Then, please work hard.”

Chairman Won JinMoon stood up from his seat and patted KangYoon’s shoulder while ordering the stop of all interference. KangYoon said goodbye and left.

‘It’s starting for real now.’

While walking towards the office, inside KangYoon’s head, various future plans were taking form.

Chapter 4: To Ten Years In The Past...(4)

The next day, KangYoon started organizing the team for real. Chairman Won JinMoon gave him all of the power as he said, so KangYoon could select all of the important team members as he wanted.

‘MG has a lot of talents. That’s for sure’

From Producer Oh JiWan, the main commander-in-practice who produced countless albums that were big hits; to Vice-Chief Lee JiYeon, who was the ace of the Promotion Team and was well known for being able to read the latest trends of the media; JooAh’s #1 manager, Kang SuMin, who knew everything about JooAh; and lastly, the one who would choose the songs, MG’s main composer SeolLin. These people were aces who KangYoon had heard of at least once in his ‘past’.

To think that in his previous life, he never even had the chance to work with these people, but now he was the Planning and Management Team Leader who ordered these people around. KangYoon felt the responsibility, along with a gratitude for his new life.

After KangYoon selected the team members, he held the first meeting in his own office. After everyone gathered, he did a brief self-introduction and started the meeting.

“The objective this time is to successfully debut in the Japanese market, and place within the top 5 of the Oricon Chart.”

Everyone groaned at KangYoon’s objective. They were aces alright, but to debut into Japan was a completely different matter. To Korean singers, the Japanese market was an exclusive existence where one had to throw money in, not earn from it.

“Do you know who the most famous singer is in Japan?”

It was Vice-Chief Lee JiYeon who spoke first. After everyone

shook their heads, she continued speaking:

“It’s a solo singer called Sisca Ai. Before that, it was a singer called Mei. The common point that these two share is that they used their singing ability rather than their dance to become famous.”

“You mean that we should go with singing too? Since JooAh’s singing is good...”

Manager Kang SuMin added. Then, SeolLin chimed in.

“However, if a Korean singer uses the Japanese style, can we really satisfy them? I think this will be quite an adventure. Of course the lyrics will have to be translated into Japanese, but changing the style of music will not be easy at all.”

“It’s a debut into Japan. To do that, we need to understand their way of thinking. If acoustic music is the trend, then I think it’s safer to follow the trend.”

“However, then what happens to JooAh’s own style? Of course, JooAh won’t be weak at acoustic music, but if that happens, then we won’t be able to show her original performance at all.”

The opinions of SeolLin and Producer Oh JiWan clashed strongly. In the following conversation, the four of them didn’t narrow down each of their opinions at all. Each of their opinions on how to debut in Japan and how JooAh should perform was different. The opinion to match the current Japanese style and the opinion to go with JooAh’s style continued clashing until KangYoon, who didn’t speak at all, spoke up.

“Let’s go performance-based.”

“What? But right now in Japan, the male idols basically reign over performance. It’s their trend. I think it’s impossible.”

Vice-Chief Lee JiYeon shook her head.

“People feel familiar to what they are used to. Plus, it’s Japan,

they are very exclusive towards foreigners. As Koreans, we need to make them feel that they are familiar, but to go with performance. It is too dangerous.”

“No. Performance is better. To be honest, there is a lot more to what JooAh can show than the Japanese male idols, since JooAh exceeds them in ability by far. We are foreigners to them anyway, isn’t it a good idea to show them something completely new?”

Vice-Chief Lee JiYeon couldn’t say anything, KangYoon’s words had a strange persuasiveness to them. Truth be told, ‘ability was boss’, so if she was that good, then everybody would watch her. And JooAh had that ability.

“Then Team Leader, suppose we go performance-based, then would the song be dance-themed?”

“It would be like that. Dance based on popping. One that can bring out JooAh’s specialty, one that has groove – this is what I have in mind.”

At Producer Oh JiWan’s question, KangYoon answered. Then Producer Oh JiWan clapped loudly.

“Groove, huh!! Wow. I didn’t even think about it. Hmm, it can be considered retro...”

“Japan has a longer history in modern music than us. I think the chances are plenty.”

KangYoon’s didn’t speak too much, but his words carried strength. It was because his words had logic. He seemed unreliable since he was a half-cronyist Team Leader, but it wasn’t like that at all.

“JooAh’s specialty is riding the rhythm, so she would definitely like a groovy song.”

Manager Kang SuMin seemed satisfied as he nodded.

“You’re right. You’re summing up today’s meeting in one line.

Promotion-1 team should look for a route to sign a deal with a Japanese TV station while Composer SeolLin should select a song. You should choose first and it will be alright if I join later.”

“Yes.”

“Yeah~ap”

Vice-Chief Lee JiYeon and Composer SeolLin answered in their own style and wrote down the important things.

“If the song comes out, Producer Oh JiWan should make a guide version. Imagine that you’re training a trainee and make a good guide version.”

“Anything else?”

“Not yet. We will get busy once the song comes out, so rest up now.”

Producer Oh JiWan nodded, and all that was left was Manager Kang SuMin.

“JooAh’s looking after her weight, right?”

“Of course.”

“Looking after her body is important, but something even more important is to check for stress. Even if she has to gain weight a bit, don’t let her stress out too much. And please allow her to go out too.”

“However, that’s against the company rules.”

“JooAh will be ruined if she is bound by the company rules. Anyway, can’t JooAh look after herself well enough? We need to show that we trust her and she will do better by herself.”

“I understand.”

The checks for details also ended, and the meeting ended there. Everybody received their own work and exited KangYoon’s office.

KangYoon, who was left alone, finally came back to his seat and

buried himself in it.

‘Fuu... That was hard. I still can’t believe it. To think that I’m planning JooAh’s album.’

He, who was dubbed the minus’s hand, had just lead the meeting for a top class singer known as JooAh. KangYoon was still dazed by this fact. He still thought this was all a dream. However, the sweet smell of coffee he felt made him realize that this was no dream.

‘I will absolutely, definitely succeed!!’

KangYoon sipped his coffee while looking outside the window. And he strongly resolved himself to definitely succeed this time.

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The next day.

KangYoon was face to face with the singer JooAh, alone.

“... If you have anything to say, then do it quickly. I am busy.”

JooAh was direct. And strong. However, KangYoon, facing a top singer who was talking sharply, wasn’t flustered at all.

‘JooAh originally had a sharp personality. She’s cold to strangers too. However, once she thinks someone is on her side, then she would protect them to the end. I need to make her realize that I’m on the same side as her.’

However, JooAh had her own standards, and that was based on ability. She was a person who treated those without ability as insects. She tried not to put those without ability by her side.

“JooAh, can you sing for me?”

“Sing? Why?”

“Despite how I look, I’m still the Planning Team Leader. Shouldn’t I at least listen to you singing once?”

It was a reasonable request. There was no room to avoid this. In the end, JooAh grumbled and stood up. She cleared her throat a

few times and started singing.

“Don’t forget– my name– you are– my–”

After JooAh started singing, light started to exude from her.

‘Her voice is good.’

The singing was definitely good. No one would be able to find any faults in her singing. However...

‘Grey?’

The light from JooAh was faint, but it was definitely grey. To think, a superstar would emit grey light. KangYoon’s expression automatically creased. JooAh seemed to feel something wrong, and she eventually stopped.

“Khmm. I’m sorry. Let’s go again.”

After coughing for a bit, she started singing again. However, KangYoon saw grey light from her again. No, it was even darker than before. The grey light filled the room, and eventually surrounded KangYoon himself.

‘What is this, this dull color?’

After the grey light touched him, KangYoon felt sticky, it was as if he was buried in mud. The marsh-like stickiness buried him, and constricted him.

“... I will stop here.”

Did she notice KangYoon’s displeasure? The song didn’t even finish but JooAh stopped singing. Then, the grey light disappeared as if it was a lie.

‘I can’t believe it. Grey light? From JooAh?’

Even street singers gave off white light, but why was JooAh giving off a grey light? KangYoon pondered.

“Did anything happen recently?”

“Nothing special.”

“But why is your singing like that?”

“What about it?”

“‘What about it?’ You think you can say that? Your singing is horrible. You just trust in your voice and sing insincerely? Can you even call that singing?”

KangYoon got angry. It was a disappointment to his expectations on JooAh. Being arrogant was alright, but arrogance with this level of singing? Now that was being extravagant.

“I did say to sing lightly, but a singer must do their best at all times. Even when practicing. Even on the stage. Didn’t you have to listen to this point to death in your trainee days?”

“.....”

“Do you think you are the best since everybody calls you that and lifts you up? Then you will only be at that level. I was stupid for expecting something from you and having taken up this plan. Let’s end it here.”

KangYoon was thoroughly disappointed. JooAh’s voice was unique, but it was her ability to develop that unique voice into her own singing. KangYoon also liked her singing and admired the fact that she put in the effort despite being at the top. But to meet like this, it was no wonder that he was disappointed.

“... I will try again.”

“Don’t. There’s nothing for me to listen to.”

“I will do it properly this time. Please re-evaluate me properly with this.”

JooAh seemed to have resolved on something and corrected her posture and started clearing her throat. After KangYoon gave his silent approval by crossing his arms, she started singing again.

“The you– I had– I thought it would be like this– but– you–”

A cool and refreshing sound started filling the room. It was

completely different to the previous one. And KangYoon started seeing the lights.

‘It’s white.’

It was white light. The grey had disappeared like smoke. A clear white light emitted from her and filled the room and surrounded KangYoon.

‘It’s like a feather.’

He felt like he was surrounded by feathers. A slight tickle – this kind of feeling. Listening with his ear, it was clear, and looking with his eyes, it was bright. KangYoon could smile now.

“The other people don’t realize, but you realized immediately.”

After her singing ended, JooAh made a surprised expression.

“It was way too uncomfortable for me to listen to.”

“Yes. The first singing cannot even be considered singing. It was worse than an echo. No emotions and no nothing, so it was nothing but sound.”

“Wait. Did you just test me?”

“Your position is that of my future boss, so you should know me, right?”

At JooAh’s ambitious figure, KangYoon could only laugh helplessly.

“Haha... Yeah, yeah. So, what’s the result of your evaluation then?”

“I will give you a pass.”

“I am very thankful but... Come here. How dare you test your superior?”

“Ack!! I’m sorry!!”

KangYoon literally smacked her and JooAh struggled while pretending to be hurt. The picky attitude from the beginning was

gone, and the two became friendly. KangYoon had earned JooAh's approval.

“Then please take care of me from now on.”

“Me too, Team Leader-oppa.”

“Yeah. Let's do this.”

“Yup, yup.”

JooAh cheered naughtily while grabbing KangYoon's hand. The project had begun for real.

Chapter 5: Sweeping Japan (1)

“Is the work going well?”

A question flew at KangYoon, who was handing in the interim report to Chairman Won JinMoon.

“Yes. It is going well. We’re selecting the song right now. We have also decided on the album name: ‘Girls on Best.’ It represents a proud and aloof girl shining at the top.”

“The attracting audience should not be men then. Are you aiming for a female fanbase? The JooAh I know is easier to attract a male fanbase. This may be dangerous.”

Chairman Won JinMoon pondered while going over each page of the report. However, KangYoon confidently said his argument.

“Instead, it has possibility. Currently, it cannot be considered that there is a wide variety of musical media choices for Japanese women. At best, it’s at the level that they are buying albums or magazines. The aim of this album is for JooAh to attract admiration from there.”

“Wouldn’t it instead attract jealousy? We’re foreigners, and Koreans to boot.”

“If it’s JooAh, then she can shine at a higher position. There are already magnificent stages to support JooAh.”

Chairman Won JinMoon seemed worried while listening to the interim report. However, the concepts and fanbases he never heard of until now also sparked his interest.

“Anyway, you have all the power. I will believe you. I will wait for the next report, and I will receive the next report in the directors’ meeting. This report is fine, but prepare a presentation for then as well.”

“I understand.”

KangYoon headed to his office after exiting the chairman's office. His office was already in a mess due to the scattered resources, various paperwork, many monitors, and even clothes since he didn't go home recently.

"It's no surprise that he's worried. However, it will be accepted."

Putting down the transacted paperwork, KangYoon muttered.

In KangYoon's 'past', JooAh debuted in Japan while aiming at the teen fanbase. However, she attracted female supporters in their 20's and 30's rather than teens. Cute, great, and even cool – for these kinds of reasons... There were lots of reasons for people to like JooAh. And she achieved success by placing in the top 10 in Japan.

However, KangYoon was now aiming for the top 5. If he set the target right this time, then the possibility was high.

'But the problem is the song. Even if we use the 'original' one, it's obvious that it will only get in the top 10. This adventure I started, I will take it to the end.'

Whether he becomes minus or midas, it all started here. If he used the same song as the past, then he would just repeat history. Of course, a Korean singer placing in the top 10 is a great achievement in itself, but KangYoon had ambition. He started this, so he couldn't be satisfied with just the same level as before.

KangYoon opened the budget draft. He had more than 30 songs until now, and requesting for these songs had costed him a huge amount of money. Moreover, the money for making the album cover, JooAh's activity costs, and other miscellaneous costs... The album production costs this time was incomparable to JooAh's previous albums.

'I'm using money like water. The scale is different alright, haha.'

KangYoon thought back to his 'past' for a moment. In his 'past', it hurt him to even use 1 million Won (≈870 USD). But now, 1

million Won wasn't even enough to request for one song. The number increased at a frightening speed and this came back to him as responsibility. Like the huge budget, the responsibility he felt was big too.

-Team Leader, Miss JooAh's here.

"Please let her in."

When he was focusing on his work, he was contacted from the lobby that JooAh had come here. Normally, JooAh would barge in, but today, she even contacted him before coming. It was a kind of consideration for KangYoon.

Soon, JooAh and Manager Kang JinSung came into the office. After a brief greeting, the three sat down and started the conversation.

"Is the practice going well?"

"The main song isn't even out yet, do you think I can practice? When is it coming out?"

"I told you that the guided version will come out tonight. Why are you here so early?"

"I wanted to listen to it earlier. How many are there?"

"30."

"... Oppa's great, alright. You made him do guided versions for 30 of them? JiWan-oppa must be dying."

JooAh was really surprised. Normally, they would settle on a main song and make 1~2 guided versions. However, KangYoon had made guided versions for all 30 songs.

"It's because selecting songs for the album is an important task. All the members, including Producer Oh JiWan, will be gathering. You need to get a grip on yourself, alright?"

"Oh, leave it to me."

A guided version referred to the records of melodies sung by another person, before the actual recording. All the singer, that was recording the melody, had to do was to follow the song. Normally, it's done by trainees for practice, but sometimes singer friends of the actual singer did it too.

“Is JooAh’s condition alright?”

KangYoon’s gaze turned to the manager this time.

“It’s good. Your words of not restricting so much on diet was very effective. Since then, she managed herself well.”

“I think oppa knows me better. Thank you for believing in me.”

“Don’t mention it.”

There are people who do better when you leave them alone. JooAh was one such person. Due to this freedom, Manager Kang JinSung had an easy time and JooAh could comfortably concentrate on practice and rest. Thanks to that, the two were at their best conditions.

“But when is the song coming out? My throat’s getting all itchy.”

“Then shall we wait there? And not here?”

“Let’s do that. I’m no good with meetings.”

JooAh stood up as soon as she said that and headed towards the underground studio. KangYoon and Kang JinSung shrugged their shoulders while watching her activeness. An active girl’s charm would make men smile.

When the three went to the underground studio, there was a great crowd that included Producer Oh JiWan and his team members, Chairman Won JinMoon, and even a woman in a suit.

“We met at the interview, right? Nice to meet you. I’m Lee HyunJi.”

“So it’s the President. I’m Lee KangYoon.”

The woman in the suit, who sat next to Chairman Won JinMoon in the interview, offered her hand to KangYoon. It was a woman who looked like she was in her mid to late 30s. She had a short height and had a bit of wrinkles around her eyes, but she still boasted of beauty. It was the victory from management.

“President Lee came since she was also interested in JooAh’s song selection, and that includes me, too. We will just watch from the back so don’t mind us.”

That phrase was the most scary one of them all. KangYoon said that he understood and started working right away.

“Producer, are the songs ready?”

“Yes. Shall we start straight away?”

“JooAh, shall we start?”

As soon as he said that, JooAh headed into the booth. Inside the booth, the thick scores, headsets, and microphones were done being set. Even the microphone was set to match her height, so further adjustments were not necessary.

“Then let’s start. Please put on the first song.”

From the studio, JooAh’s voice started flowing out. Everybody quietly listened to her singing.

“Hmmmmmmmmm—”

The melody without lyrics were coming, it was resounding throughout the studio through JooAh’s voice.

‘I see it. Hmm... It’s just white.’

It was white light. But it was just white. It had no sense of being delicate and it was something like a white from a crayon. KangYoon looked at the people around him. They had no big reactions either.

“Ok. Next.”

After the first verse ended, the next started. However...

‘It’s grey!!’

KangYoon looked to JooAh just in case, but she was singing with all her might. However, to think it’s grey... This meant that JooAh and the song didn’t match each other.

“Stop. I don’t think this is right.”

KangYoon stopped the song. Then JooAh, who was inside the booth, also nodded.

“Yes, I don’t like this one either.”

“Good. Let’s go on to the next one.”

Continuing on, the third song started. However, this time...

‘Grey.’

“I don’t think this is right either.”

KangYoon stopped it again. Then, it was Producer Oh JiWan who chimed in.

“How about we listen a bit more?”

“That isn’t necessary. The song doesn’t match with JooAh. I think continuing is useless.”

“But the first verse hasn’t even finished yet...”

At that moment, JooAh, who was inside the booth, spoke.

“I don’t like this song either. I want to do another one.”

When it became like this, people were surprised at KangYoon. Wasn’t it as if he was listening in JooAh’s point of view? – Like this.

‘This time, it’s white.’

The first verse ended. However, KangYoon proceeded on with the song. It was because there was a climax point at the end of the second verse. However...

‘Hmm... To think the climax part is grey. I think I need to request for a rearrangement.’

After the song ended, KangYoon picked up a microphone.

“JooAh, let’s try this again after requesting for a rearrangement.”

“Yes. It’s a good song but it’s lacking something.”

KangYoon was choosing the song as if his heart was connected with JooAh’s. However, the more surprising thing was that there seemed to be no flaw in his selection. He was pinpointing good songs and bad songs for JooAh, whether it was a ballad or a fast song. Moreover, his opinion matched with JooAh’s, so nobody could refute what he was saying.

Contrary to everyone’s expectations, the song selection didn’t last that long. They only went through each song once to narrow down 30 songs into 12, so the process ended in just two hours.

“Team Leader Lee, I’m surprised at your ability to see songs.”

“Thank you, President.”

“Let’s eat together some time. Then, see you later.”

President Lee HyunJi bade farewell and exited.

“Ayy, to think, HyunJi, that girl would say something like that. She seems to like you a lot. Is the old lady trying to marry this time?”

“Chairman, what do you...”

“Hahaha, it’s just a joke, a joke. Me too, today’s song selection was a surprise in itself. I thought god had descended. To think that you made everyone accept the songs by just going through them once... I look forward to the future.”

Chairman Won JinMoon, who was amused at KangYoon’s awkwardness, tapped KangYoon’s shoulder once and exited. After that, the employees who followed him in left in a straight line. The

only ones left were Producer Oh JiWan, JooAh, and the manager.

“Thank you for your work. Now we have to make the lyrics, record it, and wait for the choreography.”

At KangYoon’s words, everybody nodded.

“Thank you for your work, Team Leader. Today left a deep impression on me.”

Producer Oh JiWan spoke a line too.

“Oppa, that was great! Did we get through to each other today?”

“What do you mean? Get through? That’s just your point of view.”

“This album. I have a great feeling. I think it will turn out really good.”

“Isn’t that obvious?”

KangYoon spoke with the remaining people for a while before going up to his office. When he finished doing the remaining work in his office, it was already 10:30 PM. It was very late for leaving work.

KangYoon took the train and the bus back home even though it was late. When he arrived, it was already the [next day](#).

Next day meaning past midnight, not the next morning

“HeeYoon, you didn’t go to sleep yet?”

“Oppa wasn’t home yet though.”

When he stepped past the tattered door, HeeYoon heard it and came to meet him barefoot. At that figure, KangYoon was so surprised and he waved his hand.

“Get in quickly. Did today’s dialysis go well?”

“Don’t worry. Of course I did it.”

He washed his face with cold water in the courtyard and changed

his clothes. He was tired, so he laid out the futon and lied there immediately, but HeeYoon opened the door.

“Oppa.”

“Yes? HeeYoon, what is it?”

“My brother’s face I haven’t seen for three days. I want to have a look.”

Thinking back on it, he hadn’t left work for three days. He called whenever he had the time, but seeing face to face was different. KangYoon thought ‘dear me!’

“Oh, my dear sister, did you miss me so much?”

“Yes. What are you gonna do about it?”

HeeYoon’s white face looked whiter than ever today. However, she was KangYoon’s most precious and most pretty little sister. KangYoon sat up and hugged her.

“Oppa’s work is going very well this time. If it goes well, let me fix your illness, and buy a good house and everything, alright?”

“I’m alright. I’m happy with just oppa by my side.”

“I’m happy with just you too. So let’s get happier.”

She had a tall height, but she was very skinny. And when KangYoon saw her, his heart ached. However, he was happy that he could embrace her now. He wanted to protect this happiness and make it grow more.

That night, KangYoon resolved while hugging his sister. To make this small happiness grow larger and larger.

To do that, first,

Japan.

He needed to sweep Japan.

Chapter 6: Sweeping Japan (2)

JooAh prepared to stay up the whole night, but she didn't expect the song selection would end so quickly. Thanks to that, she could return to her dorm early.

“Thank you for your hard work, JinSung-oppa.”

“You too, JooAh.”

After the manager left in his car, JooAh also went inside the dorm straight away.

The inside of the dorm was too big for one person and it was also neat. JooAh hopped onto the sofa and lied down. To JooAh, resting on top of the sofa by leaving early was no different from luxury.

‘He works really well, that oppa. I was prepared to fight a lot today.’

While rolling around on the wide sofa, JooAh looked back on today's events.

The song selection process was literally a war. The producer, the planner, or the singer would all select songs from their point of view, so there was a lot of talking. However, the song selection was over in a mere two hours. And it was a result that left everybody satisfied. A peaceful selection like this never happened during her four years as a singer.

Today, too, she sang for 30 songs, but she didn't have a hoarse throat. If she sang that many, it was normal for her throat to get hoarse or hurt. This was thanks to KangYoon who rapidly, and correctly, went through the song selection. Due to him having caught on to the feeling of the songs and having found the songs that went well with JooAh, they could quickly find songs for the album amongst the 30 songs.

‘I think I have met a great planner. I have to see the results to

know, but I am very comfortable. This is a first, I think?’

The feeling that whatever she did would be covered. Whatever song she chose, it seemed like this planner would do something by himself.

‘Good.’

JooAh decided – to do what she couldn’t do until now with music in this album, to spread out everything she desired until now.

“Then have a safe trip, my dear brother.”

“You’re creeping me out. You aren’t going to school today?”

“Today’s Sunday.”

It was the day when everybody rested, but KangYoon left the front door to go to work. HeeYoon cheered him up while seeing him out.

“Have a good rest at home. You can’t go to school, okay?”

“I know...”

At KangYoon’s request, HeeYoon’s tone dropped at the end. HeeYoon never satisfied the quota for [self-study even during weekdays](#). There was no need to talk about the weekends. HeeYoon, who was now in her third year of high school, couldn’t hide her disappointment, but KangYoon was firm.

It’s all turned into application now, but in the past, self-study after school (high school) was mandatory

“Oppa’s going.”

“Have a safe trip. Watch out for cars.”

KangYoon went to work by commuting a long route that included riding a bus and getting on a train. Due to it being Sunday, there weren’t a lot of workers. There was still a large crowd in the train due to families going out for an outing.

‘When this work ends, I should go on a trip with HeeYoon.’

KangYoon resolved himself after looking at the scene where people were going on trips with their families. The fact that he couldn't take HeeYoon anywhere in his 'past life' was tugging at his heart. Success was important, but the most important thing, without a doubt, was HeeYoon.

KangYoon headed straight for the underground studio after arriving at the company.

“Good morning, Team Leader.”

“Good morning, Producer Oh. Has everyone been well?”

Everyone involved in the project was already waiting there. There was no way for these people to be in a good mood, being called in on a Sunday and all, but currently, they were in the middle of a big project. Nobody said anything.

After having a brief tea time, the work began straight away.

The songs were selected, so discussions about the album's concept began for real. There were songs with the lyrics completed already, and there were even songs with the complete choreography. KangYoon gathered these songs and settled on the order, and discussed advertising strategies with the promotion team.

The work continued without any time for lunch. There were a lot of things they had to do. However, nobody could talk about lunch. In the end, after a rumbling sound came from one of them, they ordered food from a chinese restaurant.

Lunch time wasn't long. After eating, various things – including strategies – were processed. It was a forced march but nobody complained. Today's work would decide the direction they would go in the future, and hence, it was very important.

“Thanks for your hard work.”

When all the work was finished and KangYoon bade farewell to everyone, the sky was already dark. It was summer, and the sunset

was late. It was only until now could everyone leave work on their cars with exhausted bodies.

KangYoon left his office after everyone left. He thought that a team leader should be a role model so he was putting this into practice.

“Huh? Ahjussi?”

KangYoon was going past one of the convenience stores near the company when he heard a voice calling him. When he turned around, it was Jung MinAh, who showed her thin, bare legs while wearing hotpants.

“You Jung MinAh?”

“What the heck is ‘You Jung MinAh’? If it’s Jung MinAh, then it’s Jung MinAh and if it’s MinAh, then it’s MinAh. You Jung MinAh? Ayy.”

MinAh was quite daring even while waving. However, KangYoon knew very well that this was her own style. He went up to her and sat down next to her.

“Training should have ended ages ago?”

“I did private training, pri~ vate~ trai~ ning~. What, you think I was smoking again?”

“I didn’t say anything. You got cold feet?”

“No?”

Jung MinAh’s unique trait of speech – one that complains a lot – was similar to a sharp girl in puberty. KangYoon found this kind of Jung MinAh cute. It was as if he was seeing a little sister that didn’t listen. He was always near HeeYoon, who was quiet and feeble, so when he saw the active and strong Jung MinAh, it was a new experience.

“Ok, I got it. So, did you practice a lot?”

“A lot... Well... So so?”

“Hey, that’s boring. You should do a lot since you’re in your prime.”

“Oh, I did a lot. It’s awkward for me to say that I did a lot with my own mouth, right? Anyway, I need to get back into the singers class... I can’t give up like this as you said, right? A woman must have [face](#).”

Raw is 가오(Ga-o), which is not a word in Korean, I think it’s 顔 (Kao, JP) which means face

At the word face, KangYoon couldn’t help but laugh.

“Pfft, yeah, must have face alright. Work hard. Since you will definitely succeed that way.”

KangYoon tapped her shoulders and stood up, but she grabbed his arm.

“Ahjussi.”

“Why? Anything else you want to say?”

“Can I... really do it?”

She had strength one moment and none the next. KangYoon grabbed both of her shoulders, and spoke strongly to her, who seemed like she had a bipolar disorder.

“Of course. If it doesn’t turn out well here, then go to another place. Since it means that this place doesn’t have eyes for people.”

“.....”

“I guarantee it. You will definitely become a great singer. Definitely.”

KangYoon put strength into his hands. He wanted to give her a strong confidence boost. In the ‘future’, KangYoon ‘knew’ she became a great singer, so he could say it confidently. Words with evidence have strength.

“... Ahjussi.”

“Yes?”

“It hurts.”

“Oh, sorry.”

Finally, KangYoon let go of her shoulders. At KangYoon, who was coughing since he was embarrassed by his actions, Jung MinAh spoke:

“Thanks, then and now... for believing in me...”

“I spoke what I felt. It’s an unbiased evaluation.”

“Hahaha. It feels good when you say that, you know? If I become big, then I will make you the #1 fan.”

“Yeah, yeah. Please become big. Okay?”

KangYoon tapped her back and ran to get on the bus that could be seen far away. Jung MinAh stood up to say something, but KangYoon had already ran fairly far.

‘Tch. I wanted to speak a bit more... Anyway... He’s cool, that ahjussi.’

Until that wide back disappeared, Jung MinAh couldn’t take her eyes off the direction that KangYoon disappeared to.

JooAh’s album production process was smooth. After the song selection ended, the writing of the lyrics progressed really fast. They already requested lyricists who wanted to write them, and there were a lot of cases where the composers involved themselves in writing the lyrics too, so there wasn’t a big problem. It was just that, they were taking this album to Japan, so they had to consider the culture, the tradition, and even the pronunciation. So KangYoon had to check again and again.

‘Will this be received well by the Japanese public?’

In his manager days, he frequented Japan, so he could speak Japanese fluently. Thanks to that, he could read Japanese lyrics

quite easily. In KangYoon's point of view, the lyrics of JooAh's songs weren't difficult. Rather than going for lyrics which would attract extreme hate and extreme love, going for easy lyrics was better. He continuously checked the lyrics and gave it a pass if there was nothing strange after consulting with JooAh.

After the checking process ended like that, recording day came. With Producer Oh JiWan as the head, all the aces of MG Entertainment had gathered to put their efforts into this album.

JooAh also poured in effort with the recordings in Japanese, using her Japanese skills she studied until now.

‘Hmm...’

A delicate white light shined from JooAh, who was putting all her effort into singing inside the booth. The delicate light filled the entire studio, and the majority of the people inside the studio seemed satisfied.

“JooAh, can we start again from this part? Ai— this part.”

“Ok.”

After producer Oh JiWan's request of starting again from the chorus, the re-recording began. JooAh, whose sweat already covered her forehead, shouted the chorus with all of her might. But it was then when...

‘It's grey!!’

JooAh emitted grey light. The grey light was mixed with the white light and was floating around. When JooAh tensed for emphasis, the grey light became stronger.

“Good. I think this is enough. Shall we go to the next part?”

However, Producer Oh seemed satisfied and requested for the next part. Nobody else also seemed to notice anything. Until now, the grey light negatively affected other people, but strangely, it didn't affect anyone this time. KangYoon was confused.

‘What is this?’

KangYoon pondered. He now never doubted the music he ‘saw’. Grey light definitely had a negative effect. However, there was no reaction from the people. KangYoon was lost in thought. What to do with this... Moreover, recording was the producer’s right and at the same time, his pride. Although he was the planning team leader, to intrude on such rights wasn’t a good decision.

‘Haa...’

KangYoon was agonized. What should he do? Should he just let this go? Or should he use another method? Nobody said anything even after some time had passed, as if they didn’t feel anything. However, KangYoon had some hesitation, but he firmly decided.

“No, let’s go over that again.”

At KangYoon’s words, everyone, including Producer Oh JiWan, whose rights have been intruded, looked at KangYoon with surprise and confusion. However, KangYoon looked back at them with eyes filled with confidence.

Chapter 7: Sweeping Japan (3)

“Of course, it is good as it is now, but let’s do it once more. Producer Oh, in my opinion, it would turn out better.”

“If team leader says so...”

Producer Oh JiWan’s reaction was sour, but he didn’t seem to oppose it that much. It was because KangYoon never said he was bad or criticized him in any way. After Producer Oh JiWan agreed, KangYoon picked up the microphone.

“JooAh, can you do it once more?”

“Ok.”

After JooAh’s permission came, KangYoon gave the sign straight away. This time, KangYoon interfered lightly.

“Producer, I think JooAh’s voice feels a little too big. When she pronounces ‘sute’, her pronunciation vibrates a little bit. I’d like you to edit this part.”

“Is that so? Shall I adjust the high-tone since that part has a high melody?”

“That’s your area of expertise, Producer Oh, so I will leave it to you.”

Of course, KangYoon could do it himself, but he didn’t interfere with the details. Producers, at their heart, were people who do art. They were prideful people. It was not good to meddle in their affairs too much. KangYoon was someone who had 10 years of experience, so he knew this fact very well.

The recording proceeded with Producer Oh JiWan adjusting the tones. JooAh was absorbed in her singing with her eyes closed, and the people outside also wrote what they needed while appreciating her singing coming out of the speakers. Each of them did their own work, whether it was coming up with a concept or thinking up

ways to advertise this.

‘Phew. Now the grey disappeared.’

KangYoon was relieved at the scene with no grey light. When he saw the delicate white light growing stronger, KangYoon could finally sigh in relief.

“Huh, why did I skip this part when it could get so much better? Team Leader, it’s at least a hundred times better than it was previously. This, I have learned something from you today.”

After the recording ended, Producer Oh JiWan took off his hat and scratched his head. Recordings always left some disappointments. However, days like today, when he was refreshingly satisfied, were rare. He was the one to record JooAh’s albums until now, but it was the first time something like this happened, so he smiled awkwardly. He thought he had the best grasp on JooAh’s voice... But today, he accepted defeat.

“No, I just gave a small push. It was Producer Oh who did the work. I have a great feeling about this song. Shall we rest a bit?”

“Shall we? Well then, rest up, everyone.”

When Producer Oh JiWan declared it was resting time, the studio members who were controlling the various machines in their positions sang in delight, and the other staff left with a cheer.

.

“Would you like a cup of coffee?”

Chairman Won JinMoon offered KangYoon, who was looking at paperwork in the corner, a can of coffee.

“Thank you, Chairman.”

“Everyone’s resting, but you are not letting go of work... May I?”

“Of course, please sit.”

KangYoon covered the paperwork he was looking at when

Chairman Won JinMoon sat down next to him.

“Do you know the rumor about you?”

“A rumor, sir?”

“Work-man. You’re known for carrying paperwork with you, whether it’s in the resting lounge or in the office, so people call you work-man.”

“It’s certainly better than [mymy](#).”

Uhh... so, ‘Walkman’ and ‘Mymy’ are mobile cassette players, and ‘walkman’ and ‘work-man’ sound the same in Korean. So, yeah it’s a pun I guess...

KangYoon laughed. It meant that he was working hard, so he didn’t mind it.

“Has it been four months since you came to this company?”

“It has been that long already, huh. I came in during the summer, so there’s not much left of this year.”

“Yes. So when is the album coming out?”

“I am thinking December, around the second week.”

“So there’s not even two months, even if we count this month. You must be busy. Isn’t it fine for you to release it next year? Is there a reason for you to release it within this year? I think you’re aiming for the Christmas season, but you will have to compete with the big singers of Japan.”

Do you stand a chance against the big singers of Japan? – This was his meaning. However, KangYoon confidently replied: “It’s alright. Instead, we will only see results if we release it then.”

“Can I ask you for the reason?”

KangYoon hesitated a bit.

‘Like the chairman says, two big singers came out. The male idol group Eiden and the female idol group Hydrea. However, the two

leaders of these groups get mixed up in a scandal, a big scandal where they get photographed in front of the hotel. So they ended up ruining the Christmas marketing and delayed their comeback stage too. The singers who prepared comebacks at a later time, while thinking that these two were going to have their comebacks, were all dumbfounded and made a comeback hurriedly, but Christmas ended up being blank. We are using this opportunity.'

KangYoon's strategy was like this. Of course, doing things like reporting the scandal himself as a noise marketing strategy was a no-go. That would negatively affect him in the long term. Making enemies was not a good choice when considering the future. Anyway, he couldn't say he knew the future, and even if he did, wouldn't he just be treated like a psycho?

"You're not thinking of competing with groups like Eiden, and you're not letting go of the fanbases of women in their 20s and 30s, right? Hmm. I don't have anything to say since I gave you all the rights, but I want to listen to the reason in the director's meeting. Can you do it?"

"I understand."

"I will expect good things. Right now, my expectations are very big. I mean it."

I am curious but I will hold back for now. Instead, I expect acceptable results – this was the hidden meaning behind Chairman Won JinMoon's words. It was a pressure mixed with expectations. KangYoon answered straight away, knowing that fact. Chairman Won JinMoon seemed satisfied with KangYoon's answer as he tapped KangYoon's arm and stood up from the seat.

"The Chairman's a chairman, alright. He gives me pressure this way."

KangYoon muttered to himself as he saw Chairman Won JinMoon's disappearing back. Superiors were always uncomfortable to be with. He headed back to the studio for the

recording.

JooAh's recording for the album continued for a long time. The lights KangYoon saw were mostly white, but there were some grey lights from time to time. From problems with pronunciation to problems with the voice, the guitar, the microphone, etc... There was a variety of reasons for grey light to appear. Of course, when something trivial happened, Producer Oh would solve it himself while KangYoon advised from time to time, and the song was finished.

By the time another song was finished recording, it was already past midnight.

"Thank you for your hard work..."

JooAh, who came out of the booth with sweat all over her body, spoke with a feeble voice. Not only her, but everyone was exhausted.

"Thank you for your hard work, everyone. Let's end it here today."

When KangYoon proclaimed, everyone sang in delight, and the studio became empty in no time.

"Thanks for your hard work... Phew. I can't do a recording tomorrow..."

"You've worked hard. Is your throat bad?"

"No, it's not that. I just spent too much energy... It's the first time this happened..."

When KangYoon asked while passing her a bottle of water, JooAh drank with big gulps and replied.

"Let's rest tomorrow and resume recording the day after. Producer Oh should rest too tomorrow and let's resume working the day after."

"Can we do that?"

“For work like ours, efficiency is very important. Let’s rest up when we can and resume with vigor.”

When he said that, Producer Oh cheered with a haggard face, packed his clothes, and ran straight out. Nowadays, the poor guy didn’t even return home once. This kind of rest was literally honey to him.

“Oppa, in this situation, aren’t you supposed to drive them more? Everybody does that normally.”

“Doing that doesn’t help. Working while exhausted doesn’t bring out any efficiency, and people should rest to charge up their energy to work. They don’t do well by just working thoughtlessly.”

“Wow, is it like that? You’re quite different to the people I worked with until now, I think?”

“What about me?”

“I am very comfortable. The other [unnis and oppas](#) also say that. Oh, that doesn’t mean we’re looking down on you, you understand, right?”

Unni – big sister, Oppa – big brother (not blood related)

The planners who directed albums until now were all workaholics who were crazy about working. However, KangYoon was different. Of course, he did a lot of work himself, but he didn’t urge the other staff to work. The staff all felt comfortable with their work so their efficiency increased. The KangYoon JooAh felt, was like that.

“To say it nicely, I’m good. JooAh, it’s late. Go home now.”

“Ok, ok. Oppa, however this album turns out, let’s work together. This is not a joke. Ok?”

“Ok. Go home already.”

“It’s for real. It’s a promise!!”

JooAh had a really good impression of KangYoon. There were a

lot of people who praised her until now, but KangYoon was the first one to understand her so well and lead her. If it's this person, she felt like he would give a satisfiable result, whether it was a success or a failure.

JooAh, who was waving at KangYoon, was dragged by the manager who came to pick her up and went to the dorm.

“I should leave now too.”

It was very late. KangYoon hurried home.

A new morning came.

He needed to go to work quickly, but the time when he should leave was getting delayed.

“Oppa, I'm alright so go to work.”

HeeYoon, who was undergoing dialysis while lying on the hospital bed, worried about her brother who couldn't even go to work at the right time. However, KangYoon smiled at his sister while brushing her head.

“Today, they said to come to the hospital with a guardian. Oppa should of course come.”

“But oppa's very busy. You came back at dawn last night.”

“Hey.”

KangYoon brought his index finger to HeeYoon's lips. It was an indication for HeeYoon to not speak anymore.

“Even if work is important, there is nothing as important as you, HeeYoon. You just need to get healthier, ok?”

“Ok, I'm sorry...”

“That again, I said to not say sorry, right?”

“Ok, I won't.”

If one underwent dialysis, then s/he couldn't move for 4~5 hours.

Their face would get paler too. KangYoon's heart would tear whenever he saw his already-pale sister in pain. However, he didn't show his pain on the outside. Since, should HeeYoon see his pain, she would shed tears...

“Oppa, I'm sleepy. I will sleep for a bit.”

When HeeYoon fell asleep, KangYoon went to see the doctor.

“The numbers are stabilizing a lot. You're keeping the dialysis appointment date, and above all, I think the lack of stress has contributed a lot.”

KangYoon carefully went over the graphs that the doctor showed him. It was about his sister. Although he had no medical knowledge, he could judge whether something was good or bad. He cared for HeeYoon that much.

“Please let her eat the medicine regularly, and keep the dialysis appointment dates...”

The doctor's words weren't that different from usual. His point was to keep eating the medicine regularly and keep the appointments. However, what was different from usual was the hope that HeeYoon was getting better. KangYoon calmed down with those words alone.

‘Don't worry. This time, I won't let you pass the days in vain.’

Looking at his sister's white face, KangYoon resolved, and resolved again.

To protect HeeYoon whatever the cost.

Chapter 8: Sweeping Japan (4)

“You’re late!!”

When KangYoon arrived at the studio, where a last-minute recording was going on, JooAh, who arrived early and was resting, shouted at him.

“I’m sorry, is the recording going well?”

“I will forgive you this once. Why should I worry about you? And why is our team leader so late today?”

KangYoon always came earlier than anyone and prepared for work. However, to think that KangYoon was late... JooAh was curious of the reason.

“There was something important. I’m sorry. Let’s hear the recording.”

JooAh seemed curious but didn’t inquire deeply. At KangYoon’s word, one of the studio staff members played the recorded song. It was a ballad, and it was nice to listen to the slow beat with JooAh’s voice that matched it. He couldn’t see the color, but whether it was the vibrating voice or her skills of conveying the words, it was a very good song. KangYoon was satisfied.

“The song’s good, right?”

“It’s alright. So, one more left now?”

“Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oppa, I have a question...”

JooAh asked KangYoon with a curious face.

“Where is my debut stage in Japan? Are you preparing a showcase stage?”

Normally, Korean singers who proceeded to Japan prepared a huge showcase stage, with the pretext of ‘this kind of singer will be active in Japan’ as advertising. MG Entertainment’s showcases were known for being fancy. Using the fancy stage as an

opportunity, they greeted various people related to the industry, and they give out albums here and there. JooAh was asking whether she would debut as a newbie or take the usual route.

“No, we won’t be opening a showcase.”

“Eek?”

It wasn’t only JooAh who was surprised at KangYoon’s words. The majority of the people inside the studio were surprised at KangYoon’s words. However, KangYoon didn’t satiate their curiosity.

“Just keep in mind for now, that you won’t be doing a showcase.”

“Then where do I have my debut?”

“You will know soon. I bet you’ll be surprised when you know it.”

“Hey, I’m getting even more curious now. Oppa, oppa!!”

KangYoon headed to his office as if he was done with work in the studio. JooAh kept calling him, but KangYoon went to his studio without even looking back.

KangYoon, who spent the morning with HeeYoon in the hospital, had a lot of work piled up. He already did a lot before, but there was still a pile of paperwork that needed his approval.

The pile from the promotion team was especially large. After going over the paperwork given to him by the promotion team, KangYoon opened the paperwork given to him by the liaison team.

‘What? Politely refuse?’

Going over the paperwork given to him by the liaison team, KangYoon creased his brows after looking at the attached picture file. In the document, Music Station’s ‘refusal of singer JooAh’s special debut stage’, was written.

-We are replying to the matter about your company’s request for

singer JooAh's appearance at Music Station. Music Station is only aimed at the Japanese people, therefore, we're not able to cast a foreign singer. We ask for you to understand that we're doing this in order keep the beliefs of our programme. Thank you for your interest and for contacting us. -Asai TV Producer...

It was a Music Station stage that he was preparing, while giving up the showcase. JooAh's first start will begin there. However, a refusal... KangYoon didn't stop moving. He directly looked for the liaison team.

"Team Leader, you're here?"

Manager Han JungSuk of the liaison team stood up and greeted KangYoon.

"Good day to you, sir. Is this the final reply from Asai TV?"

"Oh... Yes. I'm very sorry. We even went to Japan and did our best, but..."

"Let's go."

"I'm sorry?"

"You have a passport, right?"

"Yes, of course I have one, but..."

"We're leaving on tonight's flight. It's an emergency business trip. I will contact the accounting department."

"Team Leader!!"

He had returned to the company just yesterday. Manager Han JungSuk was frightened because he didn't want to go to Japan again, but KangYoon didn't let him go.

"Manager, this is the whole point. It's not an exaggeration to say the success and failure all depends on this."

"Yes... I understand."

Manager Han JungSuk, who was pressured by KangYoon's

strong presence, went back to his seat and prepared for the sudden business trip. These kinds of sudden business trips were rare even in the entertainment industry where there were a lot of variables. He seemed depressed as he loosened his shoulders.

KangYoon also hurriedly went back to his office, and prepared to go to Japan. KangYoon's mind was hurried.

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KangYoon, who arrived at the Tokyo Haneda Airport with a night flight, headed to Roppongi where the Asai TV station was located. When he arrived at Roppongi in a car, the sun was already rising.

“Team Leader, aren't you tired?”

Manager Han JungSuk, who was nearing 40 years of age, was feeling pressured with his stamina. He slept in the plane, but exhaustion could be seen in his eyes.

“Even if we go in the morning, we would just get rejected at the door. Shall we reserve a lodging and rest for a bit?”

Manager Han JungSuk sighed in relief in his heart. He was worried that he would be scolded with the ‘you-only-have-age-and-no-stamina’ talk. However, there was no scolding at all. Instead, KangYoon knew that and was considerate towards him. Although JungSuk was older, he was thankful to the team leader who was so considerate.

After they found a nearby inn and settled there, KangYoon and Manager Han JungSuk had a shower, and changed for work. They changed into their suits and prepared the paperwork meticulously. Then, they headed to the Asai TV building.

[Good morning. What is your business?]

[We are here to see Producer Yokozeki Tatsushi.]

KangYoon went to the lobby and headed towards the information

desk, and he spoke to the person behind the information desk.

[Did you make an appointment in advance?]

[Would you tell him that we came from MG Entertainment of Korea?]

The staff picked up the phone and called straight away. However, the reply was negative.

[I'm sorry. He told me that everything necessary was already told, and for you return.]

KangYoon and Manager Han JungSuk looked at each other. They even flew all the way to Japan and they were refused at the door... However, KangYoon composedly replied:

[I understand. Here, this is my business card, would you pass it on to Producer Yokozeki?]

[I understand.]

KangYoon left the station. Manager Han JungSuk also followed him.

“Team Leader, are you planning to go back like this?”

“No way. We came all the way here. We can't go back empty handed.”

“But they aren't even willing to meet us. It wasn't like this when I came... To think that they won't even show their face... These people are too much.”

Manager Han JungSuk expressed the stifled feeling in his heart. He sent the materials and even tried to persuade them, but they weren't persuaded at all.

“It's indeed stifling, but what can we do? It's us who's disappointed.”

“Then what do we do now? Do we go back?”

“We unsheathed the sword, so we have to at least cut some

radish. Shall we wait over there?”

KangYoon pointed towards the café inside the building. It was a café where its sofas looked very nice.

“You did bring work, right?”

“Yes, of course. Just in case...”

“Then let’s do some work over there. We can meet Producer Yokozeki later.”

Manager Han JungSuk felt stifled at KangYoon who said he would wait even though he was refused at the door, but at the same time, he felt envious. It was because he could feel the strong will and stubbornness to succeed.

The two who went inside the café took out some paperwork and started working while looking outside from time to time.

‘What is the reason?’

KangYoon pondered. In his ‘previous life’, Asai TV allowed JooAh to stand on the Music Station stage. And it was for the debut stage too. Just in case, KangYoon compared the influence that would come from Music Station and a showcase, but it was a crushing victory by Music Station.

However, to think that Music Station’s producer rejected it... If so, then did history change because he changed the flow? Or was it originally like this? KangYoon needed to confirm it. They waited for a long time in the café, but Producer Yokozeki never showed up. After the day passed by and it became night, one or two people started leaving work, but Producer Yokozeki wasn’t among them.

“Team Leader. He isn’t coming out.”

While the café owner was staring at them, Manager Han JungSuk whispered to KangYoon. However, KangYoon didn’t move. He ordered for another drink, and the owner couldn’t say anything since one customer was buying a lot of drinks by himself.

“Are they editing a video or something? No, there’s no way a producer for live programmes would do video editing...”

Like KangYoon said, Producer Yokozeki was only in charge of Music Station. This meant that he was a on-the-scene personnel. How much editing would a live broadcast group like Music Station need? Not that much. In other words, there was no need for any editing. And that meant that there was no reason for him to be so late.

“Is he doing another broadcast or something?”

“No, if I remember correctly...”

At that moment, the elevator stopped and someone was coming out. He was wearing a bucket hat and had long hair. He also had a small stature. It was Producer Yokozeki.

“Let’s go.”

KangYoon went straight away. Manager Han JungSuk also followed him, but KangYoon was fast and he couldn’t catch up.

[Excuse me. Are you Producer Yokozeki Tatsushi?]

KangYoon stopped the man who was about to leave the lobby. Then, the man with the bucket hat looked up towards KangYoon with a dumbfounded face.

[I... am?]

[Good evening. I am Lee KangYoon who contacted you before. I am a team leader from MG Entertainment, and I...]

[*Sigh*]

However, the man sighed as soon as he saw KangYoon. His expression was one of ‘getting tired of something’ as he creased his face.

[The talk is already over. We already made our stance clear to you, and I have nothing to speak about anymore.]

[I am very well aware that there hasn't been a precedent where Music Station has allowed a foreign singer to appear on it. I am also aware that the nationalistic Asai TV station cannot easily allow it. However, if you look at this video, JooAh is a singer with a style that cannot be seen in Japan.]

KangYoon played the video with JooAh in it on the PMP. It was a different material to what he sent before. After having a look at the video, which was concert-based, Producer Yokozeki answered.

[Fuu... I understand. However, to flip what is already decided will be hard. I will take my leave.]

The voice cooled down, and KangYoon noticed that. This meant that there is a reason for it. He thought of that 'reason.'

'The stage we requested for Music Station is during the second week of December. If it's rejected, then there must be other singers. The singers that make a comeback at that time... Ah, there were them.'

The male group which boasted of the best popularity in Japan, Eiden, and the 4-girl group Hydrea. The two groups who belonged to the two biggest entertainment companies in Japan had their comeback stages right next to each other at this time. However, the day before the stage, the leaders of Eiden and Hydrea got mixed up in a scandal so they ruined everything, including the comeback stage. It was such a big scandal, and it even changed the flow in the Japanese entertainment industry, so KangYoon could correctly remember the time this happened.

'So, now I understand. To allow a Korean singer to debut along with the comeback stages of Eiden and Hydrea, there is no way they could allow it.'

It wasn't that they didn't like JooAh. This was a problem due to the pressure by the big entertainment companies. JooAh's stage was impossible to be obtained from the beginning.

[Then sir, can I ask something?]

[Please speak.]

[If, during the second week of December, a spot opens up, can I ask you for JooAh's stage then?]

Then, a reply came straight away.

[I understand. I will contact you if necessary.]

[Thank you. I will leave it to you.]

KangYoon bade farewell politely, gave him his business card, and turned around. It was Manager Han JungSuk's turn to be surprised now.

“Team Leader, you told him to give us the stage if a spot becomes vacant? There is no way something like a waiting list exists in Music Station, though?”

“I don't know yet. Oh, Manager, since we worked so hard, shall we stay at a hotel tonight?”

“Hotel? There's not much allowance though.”

“Aren't we from MG? This much should be fine.”

Manager Han JungSuk's opinion of KangYoon could only rise when he said to stay at a hotel. In business trips, people would usually take work slowly and rest if needed, but for this one, they were working all day. However, when he heard he could stay in a hotel, his heart fluttered.

The hottest topic in MG Entertainment was JooAh's debut in Japan. Regardless of whether it was the trainees, singers, management personnel, or staff, it was the hottest topic. It was a debut using a completely new album, rather than an existing one, and the strategy was also prepared with aiming for an overseas debut, so everybody's opinion was that this was MG Entertainment's step into becoming a global business.

And at the center, was KangYoon.

“... The debut will be in Music Station. During the second week of December. The stage props...”

The countdown until the official album was released began. During this time, the director’s meeting and JooAh’s Japanese album presentation was being held. KangYoon was there.

There was no hesitation while KangYoon was explaining to the group of people in suits, using the presentation he meticulously prepared. No, he was more confident than any other time.

“... And that is it. I will answer any questions.”

After the presentation, which was held over an hour, ended, a man at the back raised his hand.

“That was an impressive presentation. First, I applaud Team Leader Lee for preparing this.”

“Thank you.”

“The thing I’m curious about is the reason for setting the concept with the name ‘Girls on Best’. And also why you have set the target audience to be 2030's rather than 1020's.”

It was different from before. Fundamentally, people in a higher position don’t like changes. He was talking with a soft tone, but it contained a sharp blade.

KangYoon changed the presentation and started answering.

“JooAh is 19 years old. However, she debuted early and rose to a high position. Japanese ladies admire things like these, and their economic power is also huge. What’s more is that once they become a fan, then they won’t change easily. I was considering the future, and I set the people in their 20s and 30s as the target.”

“So that is it. Thank you.”

It was a new approach, but there was no one who objected to KangYoon’s words. Perhaps they had a lot to ask as many

questions flew at KangYoon. From ‘why did you use so much expenses here’, to ‘the planning team did this, what is the reason’ – There were a lot of sharp questions. KangYoon explained everything in detail and the directors were all satisfied.

Because he had to answer every single question, there was quite a lot of sweat on KangYoon’s forehead. The mental fatigue was piling up. However, because he prepared meticulously, everyone was satisfied with his answers. However, the problem began in the last question.

“May I ask a question?”

After KangYoon said ‘last question’, the person who raised her hand was President Lee HyunJi. Perhaps due to the weight of the position known as the ‘President’, KangYoon tensed.

“Please.”

“The preparations are all wonderful. Whether it is the concept of the album or the aim of the plan. I can see that you have analyzed Japan meticulously and I can see the evidence of working hard to set the target, and I can’t find any fault. However, I have one thing I’m worried about.”

President Lee HyunJi went roundabout with her words before pointing the center with a laser pointer. It was the part where ‘Music Station Debut’ was written, and she got to the main point.

“Music Station stage. That’s the place for JooAh’s debut into Japan on the second week of December, right?”

“That is so.”

“Can JooAh definitely stand on that stage?”

A very direct question flew at him. The Music Station debut stage was crucial for JooAh’s debut into Japan. However, to question whether the whole point was possible... From one point of view, this was a question of disdain. Can you really do this? – It could be interpreted like this. However KangYoon replied calmly:

“Yes, of course. This is the whole point.”

“That’s right. The whole point.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon had no hesitation. At that, President Lee HyunJi creased her brows a little.

“However, if I remember correctly, Eiden and Hydrea, the two groups with the two biggest entertainment companies backing them each, have their comeback stage on Music Station during the second week of December. It seems that they normally don’t allow any other stages to happen during this time, whether it is a comeback stage or a debut stage. I also heard that even Asai TV allowed for this ‘tradition’ to happen since the power of those stars are so strong. So this is possible? May I inquire the reason?”

President Lee HyunJi attacked KangYoon without holding back. KangYoon’s presentation was perfect in her ears. However, here, there was a fatal flaw. The Music Station debut stage – it was this. If he couldn’t find the solution to this flaw, then this album would fail. And failure was not allowed.

The people murmured to each other. The ripple was big since the majority didn’t know of this information. However, even with the voices getting louder, KangYoon wasn’t moved one bit. No, he was instead waiting for those words.

“I will speak directly. Eiden and Hydrea will absolutely not appear on Music Station during the second week of December.”

When KangYoon proclaimed with a big voice, the people started talking louder.

Chapter 9: Sweeping Japan (5)

“What’s the reason?”

President Lee HyunJi crossed her arms and demanded answers.

It was the close minded Asai TV, and Music Station in which no foreigners ever appeared on.

On top of that, Eiden and Hydrea, from the big 3 entertainment companies were having a comeback stage. In this situation, a Korean singer will have a debut stage?

She didn’t understand the reason for Asai TV’s producers to let JooAh onto the stage.

KangYoon calmly explained the answer for her question.

“Would you see here?”

When KangYoon put the USB onto the projector, a photograph showed up.

The photo showed a man with a hat pressed on to his head, and a hooded woman was nicely holding hands while they returned a key to the reception of a hotel. And a woman who was photographing the whole thing from far away could also be seen in the photo.

“What... is this?”

President Lee HyunJi and the Directors all demanded answers from KangYoon.

They knew who the people inside the photo was without anyone having to tell them.

It was Eiden’s leader Ryuuji and Hydrea’s leader Rita.

“Looks like they were photographed by a reporter when they were coming out of a hotel. They say Japanese reporters were awful but this...”

A middle aged Director, who was sitting next to President Lee

HyunJi, realized what the photo was about right away.

The photo in which there was a woman who was using a huge telephoto lens to photograph a man and a woman made everyone shocked.

“Ayy... This is a huge scandal. What does Team Leader Lee intend to do with this photo?”

Chairman Won JinMoon asked KangYoon. He was calm on the outside but he was shocked at KangYoon who got this information from who-knows-where. He wanted to whip KangYoon to make him speak quickly about the source of the photo to how he will deal with it. However, he was the CEO, he couldn't lose his composure.

“To start from the conclusion, we must never ‘directly’ use this photo.”

“Then what is the reason for you to show us this picture?”

President Lee HyunJi thinned her eyes and asked. She was about to go crazy thinking about what KangYoon was going to say next. But as she had the position of President, she could only tightly grip her fists.

“It's because, even if we don't do it ourselves, their comeback stages won't happen.”

KangYoon proclaimed. To the Directors, his words were a continuous chain of surprise. They listened to numerous plans until now, and even did them themselves, but such an easily changeable plan like this was a first for them. Everyone was being attracted to KangYoon's side.

KangYoon pointed at the woman with the huge telephoto lens in the photo with a laser pointer.

“There, you can see a woman who's holding a 1000mm diameter camera lens. The angle and direction all point towards Ryuuji and Rita. Moreover, if it's that position, she would have secured

enough lighting for the two of them to be recognizable from the photo. Even if a rumor spread around, it will be fatal. The conclusion, is a scandal. The scandal, in the end, will stop their comeback stages.”

The Directors were all noisy. Each of their opinion was different. Will a scandal article really show up, won't the comebacks happen forcefully even under the scandal, etc – they all thought about the possibilities and opinions were split.

The one who stopped all this noise was Chairman Won JinMoon.

“Seems a bit similar to ‘making two enemies fight each other’. To procure information like this, amazing. But it's not reassuring. There are too many possibilities. Whether a scandal article will happen or not is doubtful in itself, and even if it does, whether the comeback stage will be stopped or not is even more doubtful. If they don't do it, then that's the same as admitting that the scandal is true, but will this really happen?”

“Yes. It will definitely happen. And they won't have a comeback stage.”

“Your reason being?”

The reason he could procure the photo was because he knew the ‘past’ but it also had elements of luck. He knew the location of the scandal but he didn't know the time, In the end, all he did was to wait in front of the hotel where the scandal occurs. The result – he procured a photo and could provide sufficient reason.

Now was the time to bring up the real deciding card. The ‘future’ KangYoon knew, the other didn't. The effect of the scandal was so big that they had to postpone their comebacks by one week. To others, it may sound like a bet, but to KangYoon, it was obvious. What was left now was persuasion using evidence.

“First, I will tell you the reason why a scandal article will appear. The newspaper in which the scandal article will be published is

Sakeda [Shinbun](#). It is reputed as the newspaper agency with the most public trust. The scary thing about this agency is that although they are late in publishing scoops, they bring out reliable information. In other words, they don't negotiate."

Newspaper agency, Shinbun means newspaper in JP.

"You mean that even for the 2 big companies to suppress them will be difficult."

"It will be hard to suppress the article from going public. If the article is made public, the 'pure' image Eiden and Hydrea built up until now will need time to get it under control. If, they forcefully do a comeback stage, there's a high chance that it will have an adverse effect. There's less damage if they postpone the comebacks."

"....."

Chairman Won JinMoon fell into thought. No, it was the same for everybody else who heard KangYoon's words. KangYoon was speaking with clear evidence. And in the end, everybody was persuaded. Of course, they had worries.

As their representative, President Lee HyunJi asked.

"To sum up, the scandal will happen, and due to that there will be a blank on the 2nd week of December, which is, according to our schedule, should be our time. But currently, it's the beginning of December. Considering the characteristics of reporters, they should be releasing the article as soon as possible. Will it be able to affect the comeback on the 2nd week?"

"No matter how much a new paper is resolute, if the entertainment companies pressure them, they need to reveal that they are going to release the article. Considering that time, the release date of the article is around... the 2nd week of December."

KangYoon's explanation ended. The Directors had their own opinions. The core part was the comeback stages. The risk was

high but the merits were huge too. However, preparing for risks was necessary so Chairman Won JinMoon asked.

“What happens if the Music Station stage fails?”

“At that time, we will delay the debut. We are hurrying to match our schedule with Music Station but if we are given one more month, we can prepare more meticulously. It’s just that we won’t be able to expect the impact Christmas and New Year’s would give.”

The impact that New Year’s and Christmas give is very big. It’s because it leaves a strong impression on the people. KangYoon was planning to use all of these.

After that, KangYoon explained the plan B (when Music Station fails), and the presentation was over. The Directors applauded towards KangYoon who just ended the presentation. After exchanging words of well wishing, the directors left the conference venue, one by one.

“That was a great presentation.”

Chairman Won JinMoon clapped at KangYoon who was cleaning up afterwards. It seemed as if the impression from the presentation still remained in his head, as he was smiling the entire time.

“Thank you for your work, sir.”

“You did the work. That was a great presentation. Especially, the Music Station strategy was dangerous, and at the same time, fresh. To think to use a scandal... You... were a scary guy, huh.”

“I just acted according to the situation.”

He didn’t directly reported the scandal to the new agency or any other underhanded tricks like those. However, he used the seeds he sowed. He made an opportunity to become big without making enemies. Chairman Won JinMoon was sure of the fact that should this strategy succeed, it will bring about a huge effect.

Of course, the risks were as big as the effect so being excited was forbidden.

“You know HyunJi.”

“Sorry?”

“I mean President Lee.”

When he heard just the name, KangYoon was confused for a moment. When Chairman Won JinMoon explained, he understood then and he shrugged his shoulders.

“HyunJi is marking you.”

“The president is?”

“HyunJi is picky with people. She prioritizes work over people, so there’s not much people around her. But she would cover anyone she deems is on her side. President Lee seems to have marked you. Whether it was the reports you submitted or the broadcasting materials, she is looking over every one of them carefully. While there is the fact that we’re advancing overseas, she is paying attention to you for more than just that.”

Should he be happy or not... KangYoon did an empty laugh. To be marked by the president, he didn’t know what expression he should have.

“The presentation is over so, there’s only the rehearsal before going to Japan, huh.”

“That is so.”

“How is it? Is the preparation going well?”

“Yes. It’s all working out smoothly.”

Perhaps KangYoon’s answer satisfied him, but Chairman Won JinMoon laughed without restraint.

“Kuhaha. Then I look forward to next week. The JooAh you procreate, I’m looking forward to it.”

When even Chairman Won JinMoon left, KangYoon was left alone in the conference room.

“Fuu... It’s over.”

Finally, the tension in his body all left.

A presentation in front of the directors was, in no way, easy. Going against the directors who poured out sharp questions, he had to softly console them while clearing their doubts and he needed to reassure them. I’m this kind of person, and I am preparing these kind of things. Look forward to it. All the strength left his body as he delivered speeches of persuasion and passion. But he was satisfied as there was a good result.

After clearing up the conference room, KangYoon was headed to his office when he passed by a training room with wide doors.

‘Huh?’

However, inside the room was a sole girl trainee who was engrossed in practicing. A short trainee wearing tight-fitting training clothes was sweating with the fast tempo. And, a familiar thing came into KangYoon’s eyes.

‘White?’

It was light. When the trainee extended her arms and did her steps, white light filled the training room.

‘There’s light from dancing too? Ayy...’

He thought that only singing emitted light, but to think dancing emitted light too... KangYoon was delighted at this ability, but at the same time, it didn’t feel real to him. He quietly entered the training room and started watching the trainee’s training.

♪-♪-♪♪-

The trainee turned her body, made a wave with her arms and made the dancing while matching the fast tempo of the music. Beads of sweat fell onto the floor and friction sounds rung out.

However, something unusual shined from the trainee who was engrossed in practicing.

‘Grey?!’

The light from the left foot, it was a dull grey. When the left foot stepped out, the angle became off and the whole choreography was ruined by it. And when one thing went wrong, she became out of tempo.

“It’s not going that well... Ah!!”

In the end, the trainee sighed and stopped the music. However, she met her gaze with KangYoon’s, who was watching her.

“Oh, I apologize for that. I came in without asking. Sorry.”

“...No, it’s alright.”

But the trainee didn’t show any rude reactions. She turned away her gaze from KangYoon and started practicing the part where she went wrong. However, the left foot was off again and she went out of beat.

“Why can’t I do it. MinAh did it easily.”

Jung MinAh, who practice the same dance, digested the same move in one try. However, she didn’t know how many times she made the same mistake in this move. The mistake wasn’t solved even after numerous tries.

At that moment, KangYoon interfered.

“You know, that left step. I think the reason is because it tilts away from the original angle.”

“Ah!!”

“Mind that left foot and do it again.”

As soon as she heard KangYoon’s advice, the trainee went back to training. Then, as if everything was a lie, she succeeded the move in one try, and she succeeded straight away with music too. She

felt so empty now it succeeded so easily.

“Thank you. I was able to do it easily thanks to you.”

“Don’t mention it. Then do your best practicing.”

“Yes. Oh, and may I know your name?”

KangYoon was about to leave when the trainee asked for his name.

“I’m called Lee KangYoon, and you?”

“My name is Han JooYeon. Thank you for the help today.”

At the trainee’s polite self-introduction, KangYoon looked back straight away in surprise.

“JooYeon?”

“Yes? What is it?”

“Oh, no, it’s nothing. Then see you later.”

“Yes. Good bye.”

The trainee called JooYeon pondered why KangYoon acted like that while tilting her head but in the end she forgot about it. However, KangYoon was surprised because of her.

‘Isn’t she the main vocal of EDDIOS, JooYeon? Ha... To think to see her here. No, but why couldn’t I recognize such a famous person?’

Han JooYeon was a singer who provoked a man’s protective heart.

With a small face, she had a strong image of a ‘little sister’. To think he couldn’t recognize her due to something like rimmed glasses... KangYoon made a bitter smile.

KangYoon, who spent a satisfying day in various meanings, went back to his office, cleared up and left for home.

Chapter 10: Sweeping Japan (6)

‘So it’s today.’

It was dawn when everybody should be asleep. KangYoon woke up early and got the already packed travel bag. KangYoon carefully treaded towards the front door while carrying the bag in fear of waking HeeYoon up. However, HeeYoon seemed to have heard that small noise as the door to her room opened.

“...Oppa, you’re going?”

HeeYoon, who was rubbing her sleepy eyes, came out the door barefoot, without even tidying her hair.

“You should be sleeping. You need to go to school.”

“If I don’t see you today, I won’t be able to see you for a while though. Uu...”

Today, KangYoon was going to Japan.

The countdown to JooAh’s Japanese debut had begun so he needed to be in Japan for a while.

“You can’t miss the hospital appointment, okay? And contact me if anything happens. If there’s anything urgent...”

“Ok, ok. I just call JiHoon-ahjussi right?”

“That too. Keep you dialysis days, okay? Don’t miss your meals. Don’t overwork yourself, watch out for cars...”

“Ok, ok. It’s this again.”

Whenever KangYoon saw HeeYoon, his words multiplied.

They say ‘an oppa’s heart was all the same’. And KangYoon wasn’t that much different. His sister was always weighing on his mind whenever he thought about that figure which seemed as if she could be blown away with the wind, even when he had an important job.

However HeeYoon said to him not to worry and pushed her big brother confidently.

“There, there. Oppa, you should go. Team Leaders shouldn’t be late.”

“Don’t forget dialysis.”

“Ok. I am going to sleep. Do your best at work.”

After receiving HeeYoon’s farewell, KangYoon went to Gimpo airport. It was early dawn. As he didn’t have a car, he took the taxi and took out the schedule table as soon as he got on the taxi.

‘A meeting with the representative of Genex after going to the Japanese branch office, then...’

The schedule was harsh. Until now, the method MG Entertainment used to spread overseas was to build a branch office, and run around while contacting various people themselves. However, KangYoon used a different strategy.

‘Even if we have to split the gains, we need to get to know their know-how by leaving the contacting to them.’

Genex company was one of the big 3 entertainment companies of Japan. Like what KangYoon thought, they thought highly of JooAh’s possibilities. Their work with MG Entertainment’s promotion team and planning team connected well and they were producing a synergy effect. This would become the foothold for not only JooAh but for other singers in the future. Although they were splitting the gains right now, this would be a form of investment for the future.

Of course, the most important thing was the Music Station stage.

At Gimpo airport, KangYoon met the people of MG Entertainment and headed to Japan. After arriving at Tokyo Haneda airport, they headed to the branch office of MG Entertainment straight away.

“You’re late. Why are you only here now?”

When he arrived and proceeded to the training room, JooAh complained to KangYoon. It seemed like she was in the middle of practicing as she was wearing training clothes and there was sweat on her forehead.

“I came just in time. What do you mean ‘late’?”

“If I say you’re late, then you are late. I have tons of things to ask you.”

While emitting a smell of sweat, JooAh sat right next to KangYoon and started pouring out questions. They were mostly about the Music Station stage. She was excited just thinking about standing on that new stage.

KangYoon and JooAh were sitting on the floor of the training room. KangYoon unfolded the cue sheet where the order of the stage was written, a picture of the stage, and a sheet where the concept of the stage was written and the two started talking.

“Music Station is a live. You know that already, right?”

“I do. One pre-rehearsal, and live. And there’s interview 1 in the live broadcast.”

“You know well.”

“But is it true that I can only do one song, the title song?”

“I need to confirm with them but the most time a singer gets is 5 minutes at most. I will talk to them but keep in mind that it will be at least 5 minutes. Prepare to give them a big impact...”

“It’s a bit disappointing...”

JooAh was greedy for the stage. She licked her lips. A first stage will always be more exciting and heart-pounding. She seemed to be disappointed as she kept asking for more with her eyes.

“Endure it. If you hold it back here, a bigger stage will be waiting for you next time.”

“A bigger stage? Really? You know I don’t like empty words, right? It’ll be on the same level as the Tokyo Dome, right?”

It was half a joke, and half not. Of course, she was also testing KangYoon. However, KangYoon seemed confident as he nodded. JooAh was stiff for a moment before she continued speaking.

“...Ok. But I can really stand on the Music Station stage right?”

“That’s right.”

“That presen-whatever you did, I heard what people said. That big singers of Japan were hogging Music Station this week so I won’t be able go on it. And there’s no contact until now... Can I really practice for the comeback stage on Music Station?”

JooAh was unassured in one corner of her heart. Of course, she was excited about Music Station. However, if, that expectation frumbles, then the disappointment would have nowhere to go. If a singer had unassurance in his/her heart, then s/he would not be able to prepare properly. KangYoon felt that now was important.

“They will contact us within today. Don’t worry about it.”

“What contact?”

“Music Station. There’s nothing for you to worry about.”

“You’re saying the truth, right? I can just believe in you, oppa, right?”

KangYoon nodded without saying anything. In these kind of situations, it was better to stay silent. JooAh looked at KangYoon’s confident eyes and closed her mouth.

“...Okay. I will focus on only on Music Station. Nothing else. Oppa should concentrate on Oppa’s work. But, promise me. That you will make me stand on Music Station.”

“Believe in me. It will definitely be like that.”

After that, KangYoon explained to her the matters about the stage and left with words of well wishes before leaving. JooAh

murmured quietly while looking at his back.

“It must work. If it doesn’t, I don’t know what I might do in disappointment.”

JooAh’s expectation of Music Station was bigger than anyone else.

KangYoon strongly nodded as if he was going to fulfill those expectations.

The night of when KangYoon and co. came to Japan.

In the temporary office of the Japanese branch, KangYoon was doing last-minute work.

“Team leader, team leader!!”

In KangYoon’s office, where KangYoon was looking at whether the background of the stage was fitting for JooAh or not, Chief Han JungSuk of the promotion team barged in without knocking.

“Is there anything?”

“Team Leader!! I... It’s out!!”

“What’s out?”

“Th...th...the scandal!!”

Chief Han JungSuk shouted while bouncing with his big body. His hand that was holding onto the night time newspaper was trembling, and he raised his voice as if he didn’t calm down.

“Look here!! Ryuuji, Rita, a secret meeting at the hotel. Team Leader’s words were right!!”

Finally what should have happened, happened. KangYoon sighed in relief. However, the real work started now. KangYoon calmly ordered.

“I understand. We were preparing for this moment anyway. Please get the materials we prepared yesterday. We will directly head to Asai TV.”

“Yes, Team Leader.”

Chief Han JungSuk wiped his sweat with a tissue while calming himself down. KangYoon took the necessary paperwork and left the office. Even while walking fast, he called Asai TV. Last time they didn't accept the call so easily but this time he was connected to Producer Yokozeki right away. Perhaps he left an impression when he clinged to him with JooAh's matters, he remembered KangYoon right away.

[I want to meet you, but is the time alright?]

[Then... Is today alright with you?]

This time, Producer Yokozeki seemed urgent as he accepted right away. KangYoon said okay and headed straight to Asai TV station.

The place where he met with producer Yokozeki was a café with a nice mood near the TV station. The small door left an impression, and it was a place where some Japanese celebrities often went to.

[Welcome.]

[Good evening.]

After exchanging greetings, the two went to the point right away. KangYoon was very direct with his words.

[I looked for you to talk about the matter I consulted to you last time,]

[The matter about the singer called JooAh?]

[Yes.]

At KangYoon's hand signal, Chief Han JungSuk put some materials on the table. JooAh's album and her songs, and there were lots of contents about the stage and the concept of the album. Last time, Producer Yokozeki didn't even try to look at them but today was different. He started looking over the materials.

[Hmm... The singer is alright. Her age is fine, and her stage seems to match exactly to out stage, too...]

However, he shook his head as if something weighed on his mind.

[However, as you know, there wasn't a precedent where a singer from another country stood on Music Station. This is the tradition we kept until now. I'm not sure if the general manager will approve...]

Producer Yokozeki expressed his difficulties – There was a blank. But should I fill this blank even if I has to break the tradition? He was pondering. Of course, the materials were alright. However, should I do this even while taking the risks? Is your performance that good? Can I be reassured? – He was asking that.

[Would you have a look at this?]

KangYoon who caught on to that thought, took out a paperwork envelope. Then he played a video on the PMP. Unlike last time, Producer Yokozeki was serious when he was checking it out.

‘Huh?’

Then, his reaction became different. He, who expressed difficulties, started watching the video seriously, and he picked up his pen while checking various things from the document. After a long while, he finished and spoke.

[...You've really prepared well. You've done a fine research into the characteristics of the Japanese population. If it's this stage, then it would get through even if it's not Music Station. I'm honest.]

JooAh's stage was definitely attractive. If the concert happens as designed and like the video, then nobody would even think about the blank left by the scandal. Producer Yokozeki praised KangYoon, which was rare.

KangYoon felt good since it felt as if he was rewarded for his efforts. However, it wasn't like the performance was over so he didn't relax.

[It's a fine stage. And that condition to pay for the expenses of the first stage – it's not a bad condition for us. The time...]

[If we want to show properly what we've prepared, we need about 7 minutes.]

[7 minutes, you say. Ok. We have a blank anyway so... 8 minutes. I will give you 8 minutes. You can increase or decrease the time by 1 minute so use it all you want.]

8 minutes, now it was sufficient to do 2 songs. He planned the debut to have one song for a big impact, but now he had time for another. This was great. And KangYoon realized.

‘The future has changed.’

He changed the future by his efforts. Originally, JooAh does only one song for the Music Station. But to think there's two now... Was it a reward for his efforts? KangYoon was delighted but at the same time, nervous. He put in effort to pioneer his future but when the result actually came to him, he was very nervous.

[Thank you.]

[No, please take care of us. You can set the stage devices by Thursday. I will send you the detailed schedules by e-mail.]

After setting an appointment, KangYoon and Producer Yokozeki did a handshake before going their own ways. Coming out of the café, chief Han JungSuk couldn't hide his delight.

“Team Leader. We did it, we did it! I was so nervous but it's the real Music Station!!”

“It's thanks to everyone's efforts. Thank you for your work.”

In fact, Music Station was a reward for KangYoon's work. However, he spread the contribution to everyone. At that figure, Han JungSuk was surprised.

“Team Leader is different.”

“Different?”

“You’re a cool person. Team Leader did most of the work and... Hahaha. I worked in this industry for 10 years but I didn’t know that I would get to work with a person like you. Today, I’m really happy. Hahaha!!”

He looked really happy. He laughed sonorously and KangYoon also laughed with a ‘pfft’ on the side.

‘Now for the main event,’

Music Station stage – now he was in orbit. KangYoon looked at the sky which looked clearer than ever. KangYoon’s heart was becoming more and more excited as the sky seemed as if it was blessing him.

Chapter 11: Sweeping Japan (7)

One day before the Music Station live broadcast.

KangYoon was at the opening hall of Asai TV where the live recordings would be carried out.

[There, there!! Ah, really!! Hey, what do you want me to do if you put the moving there?]

(I'm not sure what a 'moving' is... Probably a stage prop)

[I'm sorry, I'm sorry.]

[You idiot! Look at the blueprint, the blueprint!!]

Music Station didn't have a lot of stage props to set, but today a large scale construction was underway. Thanks to that, they had to hire one-time workers, which they didn't do normally, so the place was chaotic.

A Music Station stage was a stage where various singers requested various things. If they accepted all those requests then the stage would just become pure chaos. Still, due to Producer Yokozeki cutting a majority of the requests so the stage was less chaotic than before.

However, there was one person who this knife-like producer couldn't refuse a request from. It was the request from KangYoon, who was in front of his eyes.

[I repeat but if you spread rumors around how I let you do all this, then I will be in a real mess.]

[I understand. Thank you.]

Producer Yokozeki spoke to KangYoon with a difficult expression. KangYoon nodded as if he knew everything. For him, he needed to repay KangYoon, who filled the sudden blank. KangYoon also knew that fact and used it moderately. Of course, if rumors spread around how this happened, then chaos would

ensue. If the live broadcast happens, then there maybe suspicions, but Producer Yokozeki said he would take care of what would happen afterwards.

[This really is a first. You did say you will take care of the stage prop expenses but a specialized stage like this should never happen.]

[I will make not regret your consideration.]

To think he allowed a foreigner, moreover, a Korean, to do this... Producer Yokozeki sighed. Of course, he partnered with Genex, one of the big 3 entertainment companies of Japan, but strictly speaking, this was a contract between a Korean entertainment company and Asai TV. To think something like this would happen in this close-minded TV station...

KangYoon left Producer Yokozeki and headed to the stage. The stage was wide and the lightings and the stage props were all beautiful. He checked the blueprint and the devices one by one and he went to the lightings director to discuss about the settings.

[It will start with a blue tone and it will slowly...]

After discussing the settings of the lights with the lightings director, he also discussed how the device should be used, timing and lots of other details. Originally, he would just leave it to the lightings director completely, but this time, he couldn't completely let it go. KangYoon needed to have the entire structure of the stage in mind.

KangYoon, who was at Asai TV station all morning, returned to MG Entertainment Japanese branch in the afternoon. In the branch office, the already produced albums were piled up and the office workers including the promotion team, JooAh's manager, and various on-the-scene workers were on their edge waiting for the schedule.

The day before JooAh's Japanese debut, the entire company was

in tension.

“Oppa, you came?”

“Yes, I came.”

JooAh, who was practicing the dance with the dance team greeted KangYoon cheerfully. Her thin clothes were tightly clinging to her body due to sweat. KangYoon handed out bottles of cold water.

“Thank you!!”

Everyone, who were practicing, quickly whisked away the bottles. Then, resting time came naturally. JooAh naturally came next to KangYoon and sat.

“Is the preparation going well, oppa?”

“It is going well. You can do the rehearsal, and the dry rehearsal too, so don’t worry about it.”

“Wow. Oppa’s really skillful. I didn’t think I would be able to do that here.”

JooAh resolved that she would start from the bottom no matter the treatment, when she came to Japan. She heard that Japanese idols came to work on the subway. No rehearsal time was the basics. However, when she worked with KangYoon, the preparation was so perfect that she didn’t need to worry about anything.

“Didn’t I say? That you only need to focus on the music.”

JooAh never had it this easy. Until now, KangYoon never contacted her outside singing, or made her worry while working. He really made JooAh be able to focus only on music.

“...Oppa is really amazing huh.”

“Hey, you’re giving me the shivers. I can watch the practice, right?”

“OF course. Please watch.”

JooAh had no hesitation at all. Until now, she had no schedules including minor ones. This meant that she could pour all her effort into practice. JooAh was confident.

Resting time ended soon.

In the training room which had mirrors on all 4 sides, Dancers stood around JooAh with her as the center. With the ready signal, KangYoon played the music.

-胸で - - 叫ぶ - - dream - - (‘munede - - sakebu - - dream - -’ / dream - - my heart - - cries out - -)

Through the speaker, JooAh’s voice spread out to the surroundings. And JooAh and the dancers started dancing in unison. JooAh’s wave and the dancers’ wave matched and the dance became one.

In KangYoon’s eyes, it wasn’t only the dance that was reflected.

‘The light comes out with JooAh as the center, huh. The light from the dancers makes JooAh seem brighter. Is it due to the rhythm of the song? It sure is beautiful.’

White light came out from JooAh originally but today, she looked more shiny. That light was so bright that KangYoon subconsciously wanted to close his eyes. It was that bright, and beautiful, of a light.

‘This in addition to live... I won’t be able to open my eyes.’

Looking at JooAh’s rehearsal, KangYoon’s expectations became higher. JooAh was a top class singer no matter who said something. His expectations were also becoming reality like that.

Currently, MG Entertainment was all focused on JooAh’s Japanese album. It was because they would decide if they would spread overseas for real, according to the success and failure of this album.

“Is it not time yet?”

“Yes, President. There’s two more hours.”

President Lee HyunJi showed an expression of nervousness, which was unlike her. The secretary brought her a cup of tea, but unlike usual, she didn’t drink it and she just cooled it down.

“JooAh has to do well today, I’m worried.”

President Lee HyunJi, who was stirring her tea cup round and round all the time, turned her eyes to the paperwork which she didn’t go over. It was a report about the selection of the next generation girl group.

“The things trainers evaluate on are all about ability and they are no good in evaluation the qualities of a star. Hmm... Secretary Yang. The planner for the next generation girl group wasn’t decided yet right?”

“Yes, President.”

“The Chairman also didn’t say anything special, right?”

“Yes, he didn’t mention anything concrete yet.”

“Is that so...”

President Lee HyunJi started flipping the report with the title ‘Report on Candidates for the Next Generation Girl Group’ and looked through it. There was a acceptance box, but she didn’t check the box. She just wrote ‘turned down’ in big letters and put it on one side.

“Shall I give it to the Team Leader?”

“Just leave it. There’s another person to give this to.”

The secretary politely bowed and left, and President Lee HyunJi looked at the clock again nervously.

D-Day.

From early morning, KangYoon and JooAh headed towards Asai

TV on the van. They came early thinking they would rehearse first and confirm the line of sight, unlike other singers.

[You really are hard working.]

[Hahaha.]

Producer Yokozeki could only be stunned while looking at KangYoon. Until now, he hadn't seen this kind of strange planner. Moreover, a planner that appeared on the scene so frequently like this... He even wondered if all Koreans were like this.

They came early in the morning so JooAh could have a total of 3 rehearsals before other singers came. Although they couldn't use the stage devices, but they could confirm the line of sight and even had a dress rehearsal so it was all worth it.

After KangYoon greeted the staff again, when he came back to see that JooAh was missing, he asked her manager who was behind the stage.

“Where has JooAh gone to?”

“She's in the waiting room. She said she wanted to be alone...”

KangYoon headed straight towards the waiting room. It was to check for her condition for the final time. He knocked the tightly shut waiting room door.

“Who is it?”

However, a sharp voice could be heard.

“May I come in?”

“KangYoon-oppa? Come in.”

When she realized it was KangYoon, her voice became softer. KangYoon carefully went inside.

“How is your condition?”

“It's the best.”

JooAh, who was already wearing the dress for the stage and

prepared to go on the stage, was calming her mind. The makeup wasn't completely done yet, but she was imagining today's stage while controlling her mind.

“That's a relief. Then have a good rest.”

KangYoon didn't talk a lot. JooAh was a person who did better if you believed in her. KangYoon who already knew her character didn't need to say anything more to her.

However, it was JooAh who grabbed KangYoon who was about to leave.

“Oppa.”

“Yes? Do you need anything else?”

“...Oppa is sure different.”

“What is?”

KangYoon felt strange. JooAh always said this. When he was about to ask what she meant, since he didn't know, JooAh spoke.

“Everybody else only tries to control me. Saying I'm too young, saying I'm being paid attention to, saying I can't look after myself alone, etc... But oppa was different. You kept believing in me. Thank you.”

The thought that that person believed in me. Trust.

To JooAh, KangYoon's such thoughts were very big. MG Entertainment meticulously only sends a singer that was planned by a planner. They were tight on the watch even to the point that they wrote scripts for what one should say and what one shouldn't, and even made up one's character. However, KangYoon was different.

He set the environment for JooAh to do whatever she wanted to do on the stage, and he planted the thought that he always believed in her. This was the reason why JooAh came to trust KangYoon. And the various things KangYoon showed him, whether it was the

incident in the recording studio or the debut stage... ‘I am behind your back so do whatever you wanted to do’ – this reassurance was the final strike.

Now, JooAh would believe it even if KangYoon said that the sun rose from the west.

“JooAh.”

“Yes, Oppa?”

“If you are thankful, then just sweep them all. Okay?”

“Of course. Look forward to it.”

When KangYoon held up his right hand, JooAh high fived him with a loud sound before running onto the stage.

[Singer JooAh goes on top of Japan after Korea]

9:25AM Thursday 20th December

-Celebrity news reporter Lee YeonCham.

JooAh, a Korean singer, topped 1st on the Oricon chart. JooAh, who debuted with the album ‘Girls on Best’, had her debut stage on Asai TV’s Music Station with the title song ‘The One’. And after that she rose up sharply and within one week, she was at the summit. Until now, there wasn’t a case where a foreigner singer stood on Music Station and it is analyzed that her astonishing ability was the main reason.

(Omitted)

JooAh is considered one of the top singers of the Korean singer industry. She debuted at 14...

(Omitted)

JooAh who debuted beautifully through Music Station gathered momentum and various TV stations are sending love-calls to her. The order for albums were also endless and so a

2nd production is now in process.

(Omitted)

Through JooAh's precedent, it is expected that Korean singers would finally start debuting in Japan for real.

(The above is a news article, if you didn't get it)

Chapter 12: Sweeping Japan (8)

“I’m sorry.”

-I’m alright, oppa. It’s just your work, isn’t it?

“Thank you for understanding. Anyway, sorry. I should’ve gone back on Saturday...”

While KangYoon was talking to HeeYoon on the phone, he couldn’t help but feel sorry.

He thought that when the Music Station stage was over, he could quickly pack up and go back home, but there were a lot more work left than he thought.

Fortunately, HeeYoon understood his circumstances and encouraged KangYoon.

-I’ve seen the article, JooAh-unni hit a jackpot. It’s all the rage now.

“It indeed was a jackpot. Thanks to that, there is a shortage of hands so I’m not able to go... You’ve received the regular dialysis, right?”

-Hey, don’t start this again. That’s the problem with you, oppa. Don’t worry about it. Did you eat your meals regularly too?”

“Of course. It’s too early for you to worry about me, HeeYoon.”

-Hey? You’re coming like this?”

“Hahahaha.”

While talking to HeeYoon over the phone, KangYoon could rest for a while.

However, even that was brief.

Finally, a someone knocked on the door and opened it.

KangYoon sighed at his disappointment.

“I’ll call you back later.”

-Eat your meals regularly, and watch out for cars.

After the call ended, KangYoon received some paperwork from chief Han JungSuk.

“It’s a request for order from XX distribution company.”

“That’s a huge lot.”

“I think the effect from Music Station was quite big...”

As chief Han JungSuk said, the effect of the debut stage, that is, the Music Station stage, was huge.

A Korean singer called JooAh beautifully showed herself in Japan, and her albums were selling out with sparks.

Thanks to that, the albums that were piled up in the branch office were drying up and the newly produced albums were ordered out as soon as they were produced. They were short on hands so people all went to support and so, KangYoon was in a situation where he couldn’t go back.

“What’s JooAh doing?”

“There seems to be an interview with Sakeu Celebrities Magazine right now. After that, it’s a photo shoot for Yoriura Magazine. Then...”

“That’s a huge lot, especially when she just came here. However, there doesn’t seem to be much of music related schedules.”

“That...”

When KangYoon found it strange, Chief Han JungSuk said it wasn’t his decision and pulled out.

He couldn’t say anything about other department’s way of work.

KangYoon said he understood and made him leave.

‘Phew. This should be about alright.’

KangYoon was about to call for the request of order, but he stopped.

In fact, his work was over with the stage and the few days of debut season after that.

He did the start beautifully, so it was time for someone else to take over.

To do more than that, was overstepping on other's rights.

After having finished working, KangYoon headed to the rooftop.

“Fuu...”

On the rooftop, KangYoon spit out a long breath of smoke.

Smoking was something he didn't do usually since it may affect the health of the singers.

Especially today, the scattering smoke made him feel satisfied for some reason.

‘Haha. Me? On JooAh? And a success at that?’

KangYoon was still not calm.

The album sales weren't calculated yet but it seemed that they were nearing 500,000. He could say it was a success.

They said it might become a million-seller soon, so this was not just a success, but a big one. In the ‘past’, he was called the minus's hand for his repeated failure but to think he made a singer succeed on a foreign stage... This feeling of achievement was indescribable by words.

It wasn't a high building, but the scenery down was unspeakably beautiful. The feeling of success made everything seem more beautiful.

‘The light...’

This ability to see singing and dancing as light. This ability, that sometimes, when other people didn't catch it, he could catch it like

a computer. This ability flipped the unfortunate ‘past’.

The changed future. The ‘past’ he changed will have changed the future. Now, he had to be prepared for the unknown future. And to do that, he had to become strong.

KangYoon, who was thinking stiffly while looking down at the scenery of the city, laughed. Today was too good of a day to be thinking about complicated things. When he thought about how he was so stiff on himself, he rubbed the cigarette off. To think of heavy stuff on a day like today was just a waste.

When he came back to his office, a guest was waiting.

“Chairman.”

“Oh~! Team Leader Lee. How’s it going?”

The guest, Chairman Won JinMoon, hugged KangYoon as soon as he saw him.

On his face was a bright smile. He didn’t even imagine that JooAh’s Japanese album would hit off like this, and he felt that he dug out a diamond from mud. Perhaps hugging once was not enough, there was a lot of strength in his hands.

KangYoon brought some coffee to Chairman Won JinMoon, who was sitting on the sofa of the office. There weren’t any staff so he had to make the coffee himself.

“It’s been a long time since I came, but there’s not a single person around here.”

“Everyone’s out on support. Currently, we’re short on even cat’s hands.”

“That’s reasonable. They said the sales went over 500,000 right?”

“Yes, sir.”

A smile never disappeared on Chairman Won JinMoon’s lips. That was reasonable. When JooAh topped Japan and the album sales rose exponentially, the company’s stocks rose madly. That

meant that his own assets were increasing. KangYoon couldn't be any more handsome in his eyes.

“You know? I still can't believe it. That JooAh had her debut stage on Music Station. There's nothing to say about the album sales. You tried to convince me using facts and logic, but to be honest, I can't believe it even now.”

“I'm quite out of it too.”

“Don't underestimate yourself. You did it. You didn't use underhanded methods and brought JooAh up there. JooAh said on the phone. That this time was the first time since her debut stage that she was so comfortable preparing for a stage. She requested that she wanted to work with you in the future.”

“Is that so...”

If it was JooAh, KangYoon was all for it. She looked after herself well, she listened to requests well, doesn't have a bad personality... wait, not that, and anyway, she had the perfect characteristics of a singer. Moreover, there was the built up trust. To think a singer like that wanted him... He was delighted and happy. Of course, he didn't show it on the surface though.

“But you know...?”

However, one had to listen to the end.

“JooAh will be fine on her own. There is an even more urgent work. I want you to do something bigger in Korea. And so, I came here personally.”

“Something bigger... Sir?”

“Yes. Something bigger.”

Chairman Won JinMoon took out some paperwork from an envelope and held it out towards KangYoon.

“Report on Candidates for the Next Generation Girl Group? Turned down? What is this?”

“Let’s talk after you’ve read through it.”

KangYoon flipped it over. However, KangYoon’s eyes widened when he did so.

“Jung MinAh. 18 years old. Dance: A, Singing: C, Star Quality: B. Overall evaluation: C+. Has excellent dancing ability but she does not get along well with her team members and her tendency to stand out is strong, so... Eh?”

“Someone you know?”

“Oh, no, not at all.”

KangYoon flipped on to the next page.

“Han JooYeon. Dance: C, Singing: A, Star Quality: C? Han JooYeon is?”

“Hey, did you meet with the trainees?”

“No, not at all, sir. I will say it after reading a little bit more.”

“Please do.”

KangYoon couldn’t understand. On the evaluation it was written ‘has talent for singing but is weak at dancing due to her fragile body. She’s shy and does not get along with the rest of the team so it would be hard to make her grow into a star’.

‘Who the hell did this evaluation? Han JooYeon is? Han JooYeon will be the core of popularity, and it says she’ll be hard to grow into a star? Does this person have eyes on his/her ass?’

KangYoon was speechless. He wanted to meet whoever did this kind of evaluation. KangYoon was dumbfounded at this evaluation so he closed the report before finishing it.

“May I ask who did this evaluation?”

“Why? Is it strange?”

Chairman Won JinMoon asked. He was curious of what KangYoon was thinking. KangYoon also, in his own way, thought

about how to put his thoughts into words. Then answered.

“I’m not sure about the dance or singing, but on ‘star quality’ I think the evaluations are wrong.”

“On star quality? What’s the reason?”

“Star quality, that is, qualities of a star, is the appeal that attracts the populace, and is undefinable. Jung MinAh has the appeal that bewitches the people. There are many people that can dance well but people who can dance attractively like Jung MinAh are rare. Especially a girl’s dance that can bewitch the female populace.

“Oho, really?”

“Yes. And Han JooYeon has an image that strongly provokes the protective hearts of men. However, she has her own ambitious side. This will instead bewitch the male populace. If it was up to me, I will take advantage of this point. To say they don’t have any qualities of a star is a bit of a stretch.”

Chairman Won JinMoon seemed convinced as he slowly clapped his hands.

“As expected. You always give an answer that’s out of my expectations. I didn’t even think you saw through the trainees too. The reason why I brought this material here is because I don’t like the evaluations given by the trainers and the Planning Team Leader for the next generation girl group. President Lee HyunJi said she wanted to come herself, but I insisted that I come myself. As expected, I like you since you bring different answers to others.”

It was an embarrassing praise but Chairman Won JinMoon didn’t hesitate. He was really astonished. KangYoon wasn’t just a comet. He thought that it wasn’t a coincidence that KangYoon succeeded JooAh’s album. He was sure that KangYoon had special eyes.

“Now, you will take over as the Planning Team Leader of the next

generation girl group. From the selection of the trainees to training, etc – I will leave all of it to you. Just doing that is a waste of time for you, so I want you to also work on some concerts and other things.”

“New recruits... Sir? I thought JooAh requested something to you.”

“JooAh’s alright. She can do well with anyone, I will take care of that. You did the groundwork so well so it will be alright here.”

There was a problem even with working too well – this. He thought that he would get to rest for some time, but KangYoon could only sigh. Of course, it was a sigh mixed with delight, disappointment and many other things.

“Prepare for takeover until tomorrow and go back to Korea. Thanks for your work.”

With Chairman Won JinMoon’s declaration, his project with JooAh had come to an end.

KangYoon’s first project ended with a big success.

Rumors – that he succeeded with putting JooAh as a Japanese star, and laying the groundwork for MG Entertainment’s other singers to go to Japan, and even network of people – spread around like wildfire.

And like that, planner Lee KangYoon showed himself in the entertainment industry.

Chapter 13: Rookie Planning (1)

“Hey Ris, Hey Ris!! Have you heard?” (Ris = Christie)

“...What?”

Christie An stretched while reacting chicly at her friend who was flustered. Her friend seemed used to Christie not being emotive as she started talking.

“JooAh-seonbae. She hit it big in Japan. A big Jackpot!! She sold over 500,000 albums and the TV...”

To Christie An, it was in one ear, and out the other. She was interested since it was a star she liked but she already knew all this. She didn't want to hear the same story again. However, the slow-witted friend of hers kept talking about JooAh.

‘Ah, puh-lease...’

But even so, it wasn't like she wanted to start trouble. Image making was as important as ability in this industry. A rumor from trainee days would persist even when she became a singer.

She just let it go with ‘whatever’.

“Hi.”

“Hello.”

When she was about done stretching, the trainer appeared.

Before practice, they would go through a brief registration but today, it was longer than usual.

“We have a notice today. One of the higher-ups will be coming to watch the practice.”

“A guest? The directors like last time?”

A middle school student, who had rolled up hair, asked.

The pressure on the trainees were high since higher-ups in suits were coming and going to select the trainees.

“Close, anyway. You will have to put more effort into practice.”

The trainer threatened them, but to Christie An, it was on the other side of the river.

‘Well, whatever.’

The selected ones will get selected anyway.

She quietly prepared for practice in a corner.

“Welcome. This way, please.”

KangYoon was led by the trainer to the practice room. He didn’t bring anything that looked like an evaluation sheet in fear of giving pressure to the trainees. Just one. He just brought his phone. He planned to make a simple note on his phone’s memo pad.

“Good day to you, sir!!”

When KangYoon entered, the lined up trainees shouted in unison. KangYoon was surprised at their discipline and it even made him take a step back.

“Oh, yeah. Hello.”

“Hahaha. Team Leader. Surprised?”

“They have great discipline.”

He came here light heartedly, but he could only be startled at the military-like shout. KangYoon was startled at the greeting that would only be seen in the military.

‘MG Entertainment is not big for no reason, eh.’

How thorough must their education be to become like that? KangYoon was in awe at the disciplined trainees.

“This person here is Planning and Management Team Leader, Lee KangYoon. Previously, he planned for the singer JooAh’s album, ‘Girls on Best’, and this time, he will plan for the new girl group and he came here to directly select the necessary people

himself. Well, then, Team Leader. Please.”

At the Trainer’s words, KangYoon was stunned for a moment. He wished that he told the trainer beforehand. He only planned to watch for a little bit before leaving, but now that plan was wasted. Well, it became like this anyway, so he spoke.

“Hello. My name is Lee KangYoon. I will speak briefly. Relax and show me the things you’ve prepared until now. That’s it.”

The trainees all clapped. No, KangYoon’s simple sentence changed everyone’s eyes. To become a singer was every trainee’s dream. Moreover, to become a singer in the hands of the team leader who made JooAh, who was every girl trainee’s wannabe, a big star in Japan... Wouldn’t they become a star just by being selected, like, literally? Everyone’s eyes shined.

“Then, I’ll be over there.”

KangYoon sat at the very front, where the view of the trainees was the best.

“Then let’s start. How far did we go, again?”

The training started as soon as the trainer’s words ended.

After the training began, light was emitted from the trainees.

‘Ah, my eyes...’

KangYoon rubbed his eyes since he saw the light from everyone. However, he eventually got used to it, and started focusing on each person. The lights were all different. It wasn’t the type that harmonized to become stronger like the time JooAh was practicing with the dance team. It was the kind of light which attacked each other. Like the characteristics of the dance, the lights were also competing. There were a few dim grey here and there and the rare white light was too weak.

‘There’s nothing to record.’

KangYoon shook his head. Of course, he did think that the things

they were showing him now wasn't everything and he planned to watch for a few more days, but his expectations ended in disappointment. KangYoon shook his head.

When he was about to stand up, thinking he should go to another class, there was a light that was faint but caught his eyes. It was a pure white light. It tugged on his mind but the grey around it was so thick that he couldn't see, and so he thinned his eyes and concentrated.

‘Ris?’

Christie An, a member of the ‘past’ EDDIOS. She had mixed blood, with her father being American. Her unique voice was charming and the chicness and girliness made her receive the male fans’ love along with Han JooYeon.

‘Oh... she was here. But her expression sure is dark, and she isn't doing her best in dancing either.’

To think she is that sloppy even though she knows she will be evaluated... Was that confidence? Or defiance? The light was dim but Christie An kept catching KangYoon's attention. It was foreign but Korean face, a slim body that everybody likes, and the cold atmosphere and expression. It was no wonder that she was so eye-catching.

‘But why is her ‘star quality’ only B?’

KangYoon remembered the star quality evaluation from the report. The attraction that makes one want to look at her more, that was an amazing talent. KangYoon was getting more and more confused due to the disparity between reality and the evaluation.

And finally, the practice ended. KangYoon whispered to the trainer and left the practice room.

Christie An went to the resting room when it was time to rest. However, the trainer followed her.

“Teacher...”

“Christie.”

“Is something wrong?”

The trainer followed her quite hurriedly but there was no change of expression on Christie’s face. The fact that she was talked to alone meant that there was something important. However, there still wasn’t a ripple on her face. Was it boldness? Or something else? The trainer was surprised but she still talked.

“Go to the 5th floor.”

“5th floor, that’s...”

“Planning and Management Team Leader’s Office.”

From the 5th floor onward, trainees would usually have nothing to do with it. People such as Team Leader, Head director, President’s private rooms were located from the 5th floor. But to think there was a call from the 5th floor... It was Christie An without a single ripple but her expression trembled,

“Did I do something... wrong?”

“I’m not sure either. Just go. Right now.”

Christie An’s heart was pounding. It wasn’t due to something good. No, it might be. However, in her opinion, the person called ‘Planning and Management Team Leader’ didn’t have a good impression of the practice. She saw him leaving while shaking his head gently so she knew.

With her pounding heart, Christie An arrived in front of the Planning and Management Team Leader’s Office on the 5th floor. When she knocked and entered, KangYoon greeted her.

“Have a seat. Would you like coffee?”

“No. I’m fine.”

He was the team leader of the planning and management team. To a trainee like Christie An, he was as high as the skies. She was frozen stiff in a polite pose.

‘This is interesting in its own way. To think Ris is acting like this in front of me.’

Ris was someone who would become every man’s romance in the ‘future’. Albeit being a trainee, but she was frozen stiff in front of himself. KangYoon was amused at this fact, and also, surprised.

Of course, he wouldn’t bring it into work.

“Christie An. Dance: C, Singing: B, Star Quality: B. Overall evaluation: B-. This is your evaluation from last time.”

“.....”

Christie An drooped her head. That evaluation was a source of fear for the trainees. At least A would be needed if she dreamed of being a singer, and only a tiny portion of those people who got As will be able to debut. But to think it was B-... And her age was 17. Her peer trainees were everywhere. When she thought about this point, she could only lower her head.

However.

Rii-iip

KangYoon suddenly ripped the evaluation paper in half.

“Ah...!!”

What does this mean?

Christie An was surprised and she abruptly raised her head.

Chapter 14: Rookie Planning (2)

“These kind of evaluations can be made up for later.”

Christie An’s poker face instantly collapsed when KangYoon ripped apart the evaluation sheet.

“Dance: C – Dance needs a little more effort. Singing: B – This isn’t anything great either. However, Star Quality: B. This is hard to approve.”

“Star... Quality?”

Christie An tilted her head since she still didn’t understand what was going on. A trainee would hear this quite frequently but star quality was something hard to describe. Including outer appearance, it was the result of fusing several complex factors. Thanks to that, it was quite a controversial factor since a lot of it would be subjective. There were a lot of cases where trainees who had excellent capabilities but wasn’t allowed to debut due to low ratings in star quality, or where even if they did debut, they didn’t become big due to low star quality. It was the most difficult point to evaluate and it was hard to talk about it. Star quality was something that nobody talked about easily.

However, KangYoon brought up that star quality. He said she had that quality.

Christie An was confused.

“I have star quality?”

“You do.”

“May I ask what regard I have star quality to?”

Christie An was harsh on herself. She was curious of the reason why KangYoon highly evaluated her like this. There was no one who said this to her. However, the planner who everyone talked about said she had qualities of a star. Her heart was pounding but

she couldn't just be delighted like that. There must be a reason.

“First, uncommon elements will attract people's attention.”

“Is it because I have mixed blood?”

“That's part of it. The face that looks foreign but not foreign at the same time. And also, the atmosphere around you that seems cold but at the same time, not. Of course, your looks are a part of it.”

“Atmosphere? Me?”

“It's not sufficient yet. You need to do some image making.”

In KangYoon's eyes, Christie An's face now was 100% cold. It seemed as if she only rejected people while giving out that cold aura. However, if she pushed and pulled while making it look like she gave things out while not, she would definitely succeed. Like the Ris of the 'past', no, if she gave out more while leaving them more disappointed, then she would make the people go crazy.

Of course, KangYoon was looking at something much bigger.

“Then the reason you called me here is...”

“Oh, I called you to put you into my team. I want to do a temporary contract before that.”

Christie An closed her eyes. A temporary contract...

To think he called her here for a contract with her before becoming a singer, which is the same as being put into the debut preparation team... She prepared herself for the worst but when it came out so well, tears welled up in her eyes.

“Crying?”

“N, no. It's just...”

“This is just the beginning.”

KangYoon held out a tissue. At the sudden delight, Christie An, who overflowed with emotions, seemed embarrassed as she turned

her head to wipe her tears. Only then could she smile and sit comfortably.

KangYoon held out the temporary contract paper.

“You’re still a minor so you need your parents’ signature. Please check it over carefully when you get home, and get it stamped from your parents. Remember to get advice in regards to legal stuff.”

“Yes, sir. I’m...so thankful. However, I can’t receive a signature from my parents...”

“Why? Anything wrong?”

“My parents live in America....”

“Oh, yeah. You live alone in the dorms right?”

Christie An came from America and was living alone as a trainee in Korea. Her parents were both in America, and KangYoon said that he would send the papers to America for her. They finished after deciding that she would sign the paper after talking it over with her parents.

“Thank you, sir.”

“No. For now, please practice as you always do. I will make the team in a while.”

“There are others?”

“I need to pick out more. You’re the first for now.”

“I understand. I will do my best.”

Christie An bowed deeply before going out. Looking at her coming in with a cold face, but leaving with a happy face, she was definitely a teenager.

“Even if she’s a big star in the future, she’s just a teenager, huh. Who’s next?”

When he looked at Christie An going out with a thrilled face,

KangYoon found it interesting. Meeting the future stars in their early phases was a small joy for him.

Leaving that, there were many people KangYoon had to meet. He picked up some paperwork and left for the practice room straight away.

Chairman Won JinMoon's office on the 7th floor wasn't somewhere anyone could go in and out of. His office, which contained black furniture which were not too big or not too small, as according to his preferences, was Chairman Won JinMoon's workplace and at the same time, the place where the most important transactions of the company was carried out. As it was an important place, it was obvious that not anyone could go in and out as they pleased.

However, something was happening there right now.

“UNCLE!!!!!!”

An unexpected ear-ripping noise was exploding out.

“JooAh, uncle already explained it to you.”

“Ah, I can't understand. I can't!! I don't need anything, nothing!! Give me KangYoon-oppa. Give me!!”

Chairman Won JinMoon sweated profusely, which was unlike him. Of course, the Chairman had the most power in the company. He could crush anyone with his authority, but his opponent now was JooAh. The biggest star. If he made her disappointed, then there might be repercussions in marketing. And JooAh did poke where it hurt.

“KangYoonKangYoonKangYoon!! My KangYoon!! Gimme KangYoon!!”

“JooAh, there's an important work in the company so...”

“Is there anything as important as me in this company?”

JooAh was in a riot, shouting as if she wanted the office to

collapse. She had fire in her eyes as if her reason was already gone. In her point of view, it was reasonable. She planned to share her future schedules with KangYoon and to have an easy time, but when she came back after 2 days of work, KangYoon had disappeared.

JooAh, who was enraged at KangYoon's sudden disappearance, heard the whole story from her manager and flew to Korea.

“Even so, JooAh. Team Leader KangYoon can't just stay in Ja...”

“I don't care, I don't know anything. Uncle, I'm JooAh, Yeon JooAh.”

The current top singer of MG Entertainment. When she went at him with everything she had, chairman Won JinMoon had a headache. Of course, he could just say ‘listen to me!!’ with the chairman's authority, but nothing would get solved that way.

‘So you get headaches even if someone works too well...’

It was the first time JooAh was so stubborn like this. Chairman Won JinMoon never imagined that JooAh would come to the chairman's office to riot. JooAh was literally a cash cow right now, so her words had weight. But it wasn't like he could give her KangYoon who just went into rookie planning. If JooAh was a cash cow, then KangYoon was the magician who created those cash cows.

In the end, Chairman Won JinMoon had to console JooAh over and over before she had to leave due to a schedule – and he could finally sigh in relief.

“Fuu... It's not like she's a sunflower, too...” (as in she can only look at KangYoon) But right then, the closed door opened and JooAh peeked her head out.

“I will come back later.”

Bring KangYoon here before I come here again – this was her meaning. In the end, Chairman Won JinMoon tapped his head and

lied down on the sofa.

‘Should I go on a business trip to America?’

Now that he was in a situation where he couldn’t do anything, Chairman Won JinMoon was very afraid of this singer who wasn’t even 20 years old yet.

“Oppa!!”

Evening. When she heard the front door opening, HeeYoon opened the door to her room and ran outside. When the door opened, it was KangYoon. He, who finished work early and came back, seemed cold as he was shivering all over.

“Why are you here? It’s cold.”

“Oppa’s here, so of course I should come.”

“It’s cold. Let’s go in.”

KangYoon, who came back home early, held a lot of ingredients in both of his hands. HeeYoon excitedly started preparing those ingredients. KangYoon said he would help with preparing, but HeeYoon stopped him.

“Office workers should wash up and wait.”

Pushed by HeeYoon’s stubbornness, KangYoon changed into casual clothes after washing himself. There was no water heating system in the house so he had to warm the water himself. Thanks to that, quite a long time was taken for him to wash up.

When KangYoon came out, HeeYoon prepared a grand dinner.

“Oppa, let’s eat dinner.”

When KangYoon went there with a towel around him, there was fried chicken, a beer for KangYoon, and Japchae and lots of other side dishes along with Jjigae for HeeYoon on the table. When KangYoon held up his chopsticks, HeeYoon also held up her spoon.

“What did you do today, HeeYoon?”

“I studied, went to hospital and stuff like that.”

“Did you play with your friends?”

“You know I don’t have friends.”

While eating KangYoon asked HeeYoon about her school life. However, HeeYoon didn’t seem to have much to answer as she kept avoiding his questions. Even from young, HeeYoon was weak and had no friends that got along with her. KangYoon was bitter in one corner of her heart when he listened to her.

HeeYoon didn’t like her brother’s expression becoming dark so she said as brightly as possible.

“Even so, it’s fine. Isn’t there a good oppa like this?”

“You.”

KangYoon placed the chicken leg on top of HeeYoon’s bowl. HeeYoon shrewdly grabbed it and put it in her mouth. The thick meat melted inside her mouth.

“It’s so good to eat dinner together with you.”

For a long time, KangYoon was too busy so they couldn’t eat a meal together. All their conversations happened in the morning when KangYoon left for work, and at night, when KangYoon came back from work. To KangYoon, who was sad by this, this kind of meal time was his joy and happiness.

“Me too.”

“But since your work is going well, I’m even more happy. JooAh-unni hit it big, right?”

“She did. Should I get a sign for you?”

“Rather than a sign, I’d like to take a photo with her.”

“Is that something hard? Who do you think your big brother is?”

“Wow. My oppa is so capable.”

KangYoon said as if it was nothing. He wanted to do anything for

HeeYoon. A photo with JooAh? That will be solved if he just invite his sister to the company. He worked so hard for JooAh, would she care for a photo? He was confident that he could do more.

“Here, oppa, eat this.”

“This is the wing. I don’t like the wing.”

“Eat this and gain strength to bring home a lover. And marriage too.”

“...HeeYoon.”

KangYoon was about to spray out the thing in his mouth. Sometimes, HeeYoons witty remarks like these made KangYoon shiver.

Chapter 15: Rookie Planning (3)

“Hello.”

“Hi.”

KangYoon, who visited the 3rd floor for a little bit to receive some paperwork from the trainers, received loud greetings from the trainees when he was walking along the corridor.

‘Hey, hey, hey. Is that him?’

‘Yeah, yeah. I heard he’s planning for the next singer. Wow, wow.’

The trainees, especially the girls were all over the place. To get noticed by KangYoon, or to make him have a good impression of them, they greeted loudly and sometimes they even acted charming in front of him like a fox while approaching him. However, he was in his 30s, no, he lived 10 more years in the ‘past’ so, to the mentally 40 year old KangYoon, he could only see them as nieces who were acting cute in front of him. He just laughed it off.

“Here are the related papers.”

“Thank you.”

KangYoon received the papers from the trainer and he was about to head back to his office when he craved for some coffee so headed to the resting area.

“Oh, hello.”

“It’s MinAh, hello.”

There was someone before him in the resting area. It was Jung MinAh, who was wearing a sleeveless shirt while hanging a towel around her neck. She seemed to be delighted to meet KangYoon as she waved her hand. Jung MinAh made other trainees sneak a look at her due to the neckline hidden by the towel and her chestline

which were revealed due to her clothes sticking to her body.

KangYoon bought a bottle of water and handed it to her.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Were you in the middle of practice?”

“Yes. Ahjussi... was working?”

“Ha... what ahjussi. Don’t tell that to a bachelor.”

“I like the word ahjussi... But if you don’t want it, then I will change it to another one.”

“...Do what you want. But within the company, call me Team Leader.”

“...Yes. It doesn’t matter if it’s outside, right?”

“...You...”

To Jung MinAh, who was disappointed from her heart, KangYoon couldn’t think of anything to say to her. She was cute, but a company was a place that had a lot of gazes. Caution was necessary.

KangYoon and Jung MinAh sat down and had a conversation. Jung MinAh already didn’t have the pickiness from the beginning. She brightly talked about her days as a trainee and KangYoon advised time to time while listening. Of course, KangYoon never touched the topic about the next generation girl group. Jung MinAh was the same.

KangYoon, who was talking, thought it was time so he stood up.

“Then I’ll leave first.”

“Yes. Have a safe trip.”

KangYoon left Jung MinAh and went up to the office. He needed to sort out the materials for Christie An, and he needed to hurry with the work with the temporary contract. He also needed to distribute work to the various teams so his workload was very

large.

When he concentrated on work, time flew quickly.

“Fua... It’s over.”

When he finished distributing work and sorted out the temporary contract, it was already night.

‘If I go now, then I might be able to eat with HeeYoon, eh?’

It was even a leave on time. It was thanks to processing them quickly even though there was a lot. His dinner time with his sister was his happiness. KangYoon hurriedly left the office and got on the elevator. However, the elevator which was supposed to stop on the 1st floor but the door opened when it was on the 3rd floor. However, there was no one there.

‘What the heck?’

He pressed the close button, thinking that someone must have taken the stares after pressing. But then.

Do we love — each other — with you—

Someone’s singing from not far away stimulated his ears. It was a female voice. KangYoon immediately pressed the open button, and left the elevator. Then he headed towards the origin of the voice.

Today’s a good day to love — You and me —

The voice came nearer and nearer. The female voice was full and had strength. However, it was soft and good to listen to. The voice was clear and the lyrics were precise. KangYoon, who became curious at the sound, walked towards that place. Then, he carefully opened the door to the practice room, from which the voice was coming from.

‘Han JooYeon?’

Inside the door, there was a trainee with average height and long hair. KangYoon could only see her back but her thin waist stood out. The white light emitted from her filled the surroundings to

the brim. It was similar to JooAh's strong light, but it was at the same time, different.

Han JooYeon wasn't aware of KangYoon's presence. She was absorbed in singing so she couldn't perceive anyone entering. The story of two lovers – Today was a good day to love, but we have to separate – was clearly delivered to KangYoon. And matching that, the light emitted from her became stronger.

‘She's good. But why is the vibration so strong? I'd rather want her to polish her basic skills now.’

KangYoon expressed his disappointment, perhaps due to her still being a trainee. He was slightly disappointed at the climax part where she vibrated her voice too much. The light from Han JooYeon also became dimmer at the climax part. KangYoon was disappointed in that part. However, he felt it. That her voice was necessary.

KangYoon quietly left the practice room before the song ended.

‘Let's first put Han JooYeon as a candidate. And...’

Inside KangYoon's head, he was thinking tens of thousands of things as to which direction he should develop Han JooYeon.

“Christie An. Han JooYeon. Seo HanYu. Ailee Jung. These four?”

President Lee HyunJi carefully checked over the report KangYoon brought to her. She just ticked the box for the transaction a lot of the time due to having too much work, but she never did that with KangYoon's report. It was important and there were some things she could learn from it.

“That is so.”

“Then the girl group is set with these 4?”

One of the most important thing of a singer group is the members. It was because the members affected various things such as the performance concept, or the song. The current trend was

4~5. President Lee HyunJi was curious.

“I’m thinking of that for now...”

“For now...?”

“I’m not sure yet, but I’m thinking of up to 7 people.”

Then, President Lee HyunJi tilted her head.

“If there are too many people, you won’t be able to bring out their individuality, though?”

It was as she said. If there were too many people, they could express various things but their individuality would be gone. This meant that there were not enough marketable elements for each of the team members. She was worried about this.

“We should find a method to bring out the team’s character and the members’ individuality at the same time.”

“A girl group with a maximum of 7 people, and will bring out the individuality of each members. I understand. Try it.”

President Lee HyunJi was refreshing. People say ‘achievement is the best proof’. The effect of KangYoon’s success with JooAh in Japan was very big. President Lee HyunJi immediately signed the transaction box, and placed the paper on the side. This paper would be brought to Chairman Won JinMoon.

“Then I will take my leave.”

“How long until the members are decided?”

“I will finalize by the end of next week.”

“I understand. Thanks for your work.”

KangYoon greeted and left the president’s office.

‘Ha... I’m tired.’

Rookie planning was a process of creating something from nothing. He needed to produce profit by ‘mining’ trainees and ‘process’ them into ‘products’. The era was where countless

contents were all over the internet. If he didn't prepare enough, then success wasn't easy.

‘Oh yeah. Now I think about it, the members of EDDIOS are gathering. They must have become singers because they were prepared right?’

The EDDIOS members of KangYoon's ‘past’ all put in their best efforts. He tried to be unbiased, but he couldn't not select them. Thanks to that, it helped with deciding on a concept so he could put those in when he sent the papers to the planning team.

KangYoon headed to the practice rooms after resting a bit. It was to find any trainees he missed. He was already famous amongst the trainees. As a ‘scouter’. To get noticed by him, the trainees were all tense while practicing.

‘There's nothing special.’

However, no matter how nervous they were while practicing, to KangYoon, who could see singing and dancing as colors, it was quite meaningless. The lights KangYoon saw became brighter when there was something different, or it resonated with the masses – differentiating from the rest of the trainees. However, no one caught his eyes in the last few days.

It was the time when KangYoon was disappointed and was about to go back up.

“You scumbag!!”

Suddenly a voice struck his ears.

“Eh?”

“How can you do this to me? Who are you to do this to me? HUH!!?”

KangYoon felt awkward. Did I do something wrong? – While thinking this, he looked around. However there was no one. He turned his head a few times and headed towards where the sound

came from and found out a room with lights on. KangYoon opened the door and headed inside.

“Why. Why... are you doing this to me? That girl, you like that girl so much?”

A small practice room. There was a girl. She was very tall. Her facial features were like an actress.

“Get lost!! I said go away!! Don’t ever come back again!!”

Tears fell from the girl’s eyes. KangYoon felt as if someone was standing in front of that girl. There was clearly no one there, but it felt like someone was there – Her acting was that realistic.

“Ah...”

But then, the girl who was concentrating on practicing found KangYoon. The girl felt embarrassed and wiped off her tears.

“Hello, sir.”

“Oh, hello. It seems I interrupted you.”

“Oh, no. what interruption.”

The girl seemed shy and avoided KangYoon. She felt embarrassed that she was absorbed in acting to the point of crying.

‘Min JinSeo? It’s Min JinSeo. Min JinSeo’s here?’

KangYoon’s eyes widened when he realized it was Min JinSeo. KangYoon knew her very well.

‘Acting, looks – she was a top tier actress with both of these things. She swept the movies before becoming an adult so that’s all that needs to be said. A majority of child performers would fail if they grow up, but even as an adult, she kept her position as the top. But was Min JinSeo in MG Entertainment? If I remember correctly, she was in Diros Entertainment.’

However he thought about it, it was strange. Diros Entertainment was a small entertainment company but due to Min

JInSeo, they were reborn into an entertainment company which produced good actors after another. But to think Min JinSeo was here, KangYoon was curious.

“Hello?”

While KangYoon fell into thought, Min JinSeo called out to him.

“Oh, sorry. I heard you practicing from outside. So I got curious and came.”

“Oh, is that so. I, I know you. Sir Lee KangYo?” (KangYo means ‘to force’)

“...It’s KangYoon.”

“I’m sorry.”

Unlike KangYoon who was thinking complicated things in his head, Min JinSeo looked at him with a ‘I don’t know anything’ expression. Unlike Min JinSeo who was looking at KangYoon while thinking ‘what’s this’, KangYoon’s thought were complicated while looking at her.

‘This... isn’t this a jackpot?’

KangYoon looked at Min JinSeo with trembling eyes in disbelief.

Whether she knew this or not, she showed wariness towards KangYoon.

Chapter 16: Rookie Planning (4)

“JinSeo is good at acting, aren’t you?”

“...Thank you.”

KangYoon lightly said to brighten the mood but Min JinSeo was frozen stiff.

“Were you practicing alone? If I remember correctly, acting classes are not here.”

“This...”

Min JinSeo avoided KangYoon’s eyes.

The place Min JinSeo was in now was not a practice room for practicing acting, but a dance practice room.

When KangYoon saw her trembling so much, KangYoon said in a softer voice.

“Why? Is it something difficult to say?”

“It’s nothing like that.... I’m sorry!!”

Min JinSeo suddenly lowered her head abruptly and kept repeating the word sorry.

KangYoon couldn’t understand.

“What’s up?”

“They said I shouldn’t practice acting for a while so... I’m sorry. However I felt I would lose my senses if I don’t practice for long... I’m sorry.”

“Wait a minute. To not practice acting?”

What the heck does this mean...

At the words he suddenly heard, KangYoon was confused. However, he was able to know soon.

“The trainers said to all the trainees to focus on being selected for

the girl group... I'm sorry. I intended to do it for a short time, just a short time, but I..."

The point was that.

An order to focus on dancing and singing for the selection for the girl group fell whether it was the acting classes or the singer classes.

It was an adverse effect of carrying out the orders too faithfully.

And she was found practicing acting by Kangyoon, who was responsible for selecting the girl group members. So she was on her nerves.

KangYoon sighed after understanding the situation.

'A company always become so single minded if it becomes too big.'

It was good that he received cooperation after becoming a hot icon, but there were adverse effects.

To think they want the acting team appear on a singers' audittion.

Of course, there is a possibility that it may turn out well...

KangYoon felt sorry now, that he felt that he spread damage on her.

"Finish what you did just now."

"Sorry?"

"You don't need to match every practice for the girl group. Practice pronunciation while biting a pen, and keep reading scripts too. Everyday."

Now that she heard, not a scolding, but an encouragement from the person responsible for selecting members for the girl group, the one who was confused was Min JinSeo.

She blinked her big eyes.

“May I... do that?”

“You don’t need to follow the company’s orders even while ruining your talent.”

“Isn’t there perhaps a demerit...”

“We aren’t that small minded. If the company does that then come to me. Didn’t you want to become an actress more than a singer?”

Min JinSeo nodded her head a little.

With exceptional looks, she was scouted on the street unlike the latest trend, but she liked acting more than singing.

However, the company pushed singers more than actors.

Her shy personality, and her position as a trainee made her not able to speak anything about the situation.

However.

This person, who was in charge of the girl group, ironically gave her a clear path.

“I understand.”

“Don’t get pushed around and do what you will. I will talk to them to stop preventing the kids from the acting side from acting.”

“Thank you.”

Min JinSeo nodded from the bottom of her heart.

Was there anyone who became her strength like this in this company?

There was no one who said to her to become an actress, when she was unsure of her identity.

However, he clearly showed her her path.

“I will do my best.”

“Yes. I look forward to the day I read your debut report. Then see

you later.”

“Have a safe trip.”

KangYoon left Min JinSeo’s practice room with delight.

He shook his shoulders while heading home, with delight of having met a future top actress.

The selection of trainees was smooth.

KangYoon received full support from the company and he came down to the practice rooms once in 2 days to look at the practice.

Normally, an audition to select the candidates would be carried out but KangYoon didn’t do that. It was thanks to his ability to see light from the trainee’s practicing.

The trainees with ability or attractive dancing or good singing – all gave out white light. It definitely had differences to the normal white light.

Even so, KangYoon, who thought that it wouldn’t be good to see once, came down to see the trainees multiple times and thanks to that, he could differentiate properly.

“Everyone’s here.”

KangYoon’s office.

The 6 selected girls were frozen stiff. However, excitement could be seen on their frozen figures.

Girls were girls.

“Nice to meet you. I will greet you formally. I’m Lee KangYoon.”

“Good day to you, sir.”

The girls all stood up from their seats. KangYoon told them to sit down and he himself sat on the front. Then he moved onto topic.

“Starting now, you girls and I will start a marathon to become singers. The first stop will be the debut, and the second stop will be

the point of time you girls call 'hit'. The next aim would be going overseas. Anyway, until this point, we need to prepare ourselves well and we need to encourage each other as a team. The point you girls need to remember is that we are a team, one team. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Questions?"

KangYoon's words weren't long. They would get to know each other and become more friendly while working in the future anyway. Even if he said a lot to them now, they wouldn't feel it on their skin.

The first question came from Seo HanYu.

"Th... then are we practicing together from now on?"

"You're correct. Starting from now, you will have different schedules. It will be different from the other trainees. Next."

Jung MInAh raised her hand for the second.

"What type or practice will we be mainly doing?"

"The 6 of you don't have any experience working together. We will train with teamwork as the basis. And you will be trained individually to match yourselves. After training, you will have a personal interview with me according to the evaluation results."

"Ueh..."

Jung MinAh showed detestation. To think it's a personal interview... An expression of hate from the bottom of her heart could clearly be seen on her face. She came to her senses after a while but it was too late. The trainees were laughing and KangYoon was also smiling.

"You just need to achieve good results. Next."

The next question came from a girl with short hair.

“Oh, it’s SamSoon. What is it?”

“Pfft.”

When KangYoon mentioned the trainee’s name, everybody laughed. (SamSoon sounds countryside-ish). However the trainee called SamSoon confidently straightened her back and started asking the question.

“My question is, ya know, do we hafta go home packing if we fail this?”

“Pffft!!”

With a savory Chungcheong Province accent, the leisure from Lee SamSoon’s words made everyone laugh in the first meeting, where they should be tense. Of course, KangYoon was an exception.

“No. You will be together with me until the end.”

“Ya~. You’re such a cool person, eh. I just nee’ta practice well?”

“Of course.”

Until the end. Together.

KangYoon emphasized this point. I will take responsibility for you no matter what happens. So you do your best and follow me – KangYoon emphasized again and again. Thanks to the savory accent, the mood was lightened, but the point was delivered to them.

“Any other questions?”

“Are we supposed to use our dorms as it is now?”

It was Christie An’s question. There were some girls who lived in dorms and some who commuted from home.

“A notice will be sent out soon. From now, everybody will live together. Not a dorm, but we will prepare a room for you.”

Then Han JooYeon spoke.

“What if it is difficult to live together?”

“I will have to look for another person.”

KangYoon cut it sharp. There was no compromise on this point. Living together was a very important element. Han JooYeon nodded her head.

Other than that, KangYoon explained how the practice would be carried out, what they needed for now and what their personal schedules were. The trainees all felt unrealistic since it was the first time they received so much personal care even though they did receive some as trainees.

“Tomorrow is vacation. Please rest a lot tomorrow and work hard from the day after. Please take care of me.”

After the trainees left, KangYoon started writing the report to give to the higher-ups.

‘The members for EDDIOS changed from the ‘original’. Han JooYeon, Jung MinAh and Christie An is unchanged but Lee SamSoon, Ailee Jung, and Seo HanYu are completely new members. No, can we even call this EDDIOS? I didn’t select the other EDDIOS members. Am I alright to take this challenge?’

While watching the trainees to select the members, of course he saw the members of the ‘original’ EDDIOS. However, he saw trainees who shone brighter than those original members. KangYoon had to choose. To go the safe path or to adventure. However. KangYoon selected the trainees by the light they gave off, and he decided to trust it.

‘Lee SamSoon. It’s a wonder who the scouter is, where on earth did this person scout a trainee like her from? Disregarding her accent, perhaps due to her practicing Taekkyeon (A Korean martial art), her dancing is exceptional. She looks too much like a boy now, but if she grew her hair and wear proper clothing, then she’d have fixed fans who would never stray away from her.’

The trainers kept pointing out her accent but it didn't get fixed easily. SamSoon had a boyish, but at the same time, a girlish double attractiveness, but when her accent came out, everyone collapsed. Thanks to that, the trainers also gave harsh points in star quality. However, KangYoon's thoughts were different and he selected her.

‘Ailee Jung. A daughter of a rich household, and a crybaby who haven't experienced pains. The trainers also tried to stop me from selecting her with all their might. However, what was that light I saw?’

Her dance was horrible. And her singing too wasn't that eye catching. However, sometimes, when she practiced, her light was brighter than the other trainees and there were times when it looked more beautiful. KangYoon didn't understand this situation no matter how he wracked his brains, so he hesitated a lot when selecting her. When he calculated the advantages and disadvantages from the evaluation, it wasn't that bad. Her interpersonal skills were also good. KangYoon selected Ailee Jung after a long time of hesitation.

‘Seo HanYu. A stereotypical hard worker. I think it's possible to image-make her to give off a friendliness to the public saying ‘you can become like this if you try hard’. It might become fancy too.’

KangYoon wrote his reasons for his selection while writing the report. Of course, he excluded the part about the light. If this report goes up to President Lee HyunJi and pass the transaction, then the project begins for real.

‘I will create a singer with my own hands...’

The more he thought about it, KangYoon was excited. In the ‘past’, it was a chain of failure. He was a minus planner who ruined every singer he put his hands on. However, he would never become like that again. KangYoon resolved and resolved again that there was no minus anymore.

Chapter 17: Blowing Suspicions Away (1)

“Have a safe trip.”

KangYoon went out while receiving HeeYoon’s farewell. After joining the army of men in suits in the bus and train, he arrived at the company when he received a call to the President’s office. It was due to the report he gave yesterday.

KangYoon took some papers and headed to the President’s office.

“Hmm...”

President Lee HyunJi repeated flipping and flipping back one page after flipping it for a while. Normally, she would refreshingly approve, but today was different. She repeated flipping and flipping back and in the end, signed with difficulty.

“Today it was quite difficult to sign. Please take it to the Chairman’s office yourself.”

“I understand. May I inquire the reason?”

“I’m good with everything, but I don’t understand why you picked this member.”

President Lee HyunJi pointed to Lee SamSoon at the very back of the report. She did sign but she couldn’t be satisfied with this member – this was her meaning.

KangYoon spoke confidently in order to quench her worry.

“President. The current Lee SamSoon is a top tier member. Her individuality doesn’t even need to be spoken about, and she can also satisfy the star quality element.”

“It’s not like I can’t believe you, Team Leader KangYoon. However, this member is a little too different to our concept. Exceptional is good, but it’s hard to be assured. First, go to the Chairman’s office.”

KangYoon bade farewell and left the president’s office. Usually,

President Lee HyunJi would go submit the report to the Chairman herself, but this time she said to give it to the Chairman himself. Her intention was for him to convince the Chairman himself. Of course, KangYoon had the confidence to do that.

KangYoon was about to step onto the elevator to go to the Chairman's office when someone stood in front of him. It was a female secretary clad in a white suit.

“Good morning, Team Leader Lee.”

“Yes. Hello.”

“Director Jung HyunTae wishes to see you.”

A call from a Director – KangYoon wondered what it was. KangYoon temporarily postponed going to the Chairman's office and turned back and followed the secretary.

“Welcome. Nice to meet you.”

Director Jung HyunTae was a middle aged man with a bulging belly and strands of white hair in his 50s. He stood up and offered his right hand as soon as he saw KangYoon. They shook hands and sat down straight away.

“Would you like tea?”

“May I have a cup of coffee?”

“Yes, of course. Are you fine with Luwak coffee?”

Director Jung HyunTae ordered for a high class coffee. He looked kind on the outside but his atmosphere gave off a feeling that he was plotting something. KangYoon was on his guard.

As he thought.

“The girl group selection this time. I called you here to give a little help.”

He said ‘help’. ‘Help’ when all the rights were with KangYoon? This meant that he would interfere. KangYoon thought it was

absurd but he replied calmly.

“Help? I’m very thankful with just your words.”

“No, no. You worked in Japan so long, so I thought you might have a little trouble while working in Korea. I thought you would need my help. And so I called you here to know you more and to talk about that. Thanks for your time.”

“Not at all, sir. I’m very thankful with just those words of help.”

This was not a good intention. KangYoon accurately saw through Director Jung HyunTae’s intention. Moreover, the timing was like this too. To think a situation like this would happen just when President Lee HyunJi was suspicious about Lee SamSoon’s qualifications... KangYoon was on his edge.

“I want to recommend a child to you. There’s a girl called Kang JiHee. Do you know?”

“JiHee. Yes. I do.”

“I think you overlooked that child. I thought you might want to take another look at her. She has skills and she’s a good kid.”

KangYoon subconsciously gripped his fists tightly. In the end, he meant that he would put a hand. His intention was to grow his strength by putting a hand on a large scale project like this.

Disregarding that, it wasn’t like KangYoon didn’t have a look at Kang JiHee. She definitely had not so bad skills. However, KangYoon pondered deeply before choosing another person than her. This was also an insult to KangYoon.

“Director.”

“Ah ah. I already know. You must have had a hard time selecting. But you know? I want you to take another look. Who was it again... The kid who has accent like a country bumpkin. I wonder if she really can become a star.”

He referred to Lee SamSoon. How did this Director know that

Lee SamSoon was selected? KangYoon was about to speak when he decided not to. Disregarding that, he didn't see the value in speaking anymore. This was a clear abuse of authority and a breach of rights. Moreover, KangYoon had already promised them. To go with them until the end.

“Hahaha. I can make a country bumpkin into a star, alright.”

At KangYoon's words, Director Jung HyunTae's face slightly twisted.

“Fufu... Is that so? But since we're doing it. Isn't Seoul better than some country bumpkin?”

“Seoul's not the only part of Korea, is it? I'm thinking of embracing the whole country. I'm sorry but I have a lot of work piled up so I will take my leave.”

KangYoon stood up just like that and left the Director's office. Director Jung HyunTae called him but KangYoon didn't even look back.

“You overconfident bastard! Let's see how your I-can-do-everything attitude lasts. Secretary Lee!! Secretary Lee!! Bring me water!!”

As soon as KangYoon left, Director Jung HyunTae's face twisted fiercely. The pretty secretary who entered with a cup of water on a tray, couldn't help but shiver in fear when she looked at such a figure.

“It's novel. Good. But why did you come yourself this time?”

Chairman Won JinMoon seemed satisfied with the report and immediately signed in approval.

“The President said for me to go myself.”

“Really? But why?”

Chairman Won JinMoon was curious. To think President Lee HyunJi didn't sign a report like this... KangYoon's report was

literally perfect. When he flipped the pages in suspicion, there was indeed an element of doubt at the back.

‘It’s because of Lee SamSoon.’

Chairman Won JinMoon knew straight away. Lee SamSoon that KangYoon selected – it was due to the worry about her. Of course, there was a clear reason behind KangYoon’s selection of Lee SamSoon. It was approvable. The problem was that she was too different to the singers of MG Entertainment until now. A new approach would always bring pain. In another point of view, the fact that President Lee HyunJi, who pursued safety, declined this was quite obvious. It was a difference in thinking.

“I mentioned last time, but President Lee HyunJi doesn’t approve unless there is a clear, logical reason. But if she signed despite that, then it’s quite clear that she recognizes you.”

“Is that so?”

“JooAh is still on the highs due to the momentum. Isn’t there a saying that ‘results are the best proof’?”

Chairman Won JinMoon didn’t speak anymore. He thought that KangYoon would understand with just this.

“I understand. I will take my leave.”

“I look forward to it this time too.”

KangYoon headed to his office after leaving the Chairman’s office.

‘In the end. Lee SamSoon is the problem... Lee SamSoon is... Lee SamSoon...’

It was Lee SamSoon that president Lee HyunJi was worried about and also the reason why a Director tried to interfere in this. He obtained the signatures but he needed to solve their worry over Lee SamSoon. This kind of thing must not happen in the next Director’s meeting. KangYoon realized.

KangYoon headed straight to the practice room where Lee SamSoon was.

“Mornin’, sir?”

“Yeah. Hello.”

Lee SamSoon, who greeted him with a savory accent, would usually make him smile but to the current KangYoon, he had no such leisure.

“See me for a sec?”

Lee SamSoon followed behind KangYoon with the worry – ‘why so suddenly’.

In the resting area, KangYoon offered Lee SamSoon a bottle of water. Other drinks were unsuitable for trainees.

“Thank you.”

“SamSoon, is practice going well?”

“Yes. It’s goin’ fine. The teach’s are all teachin’ us fine and I’m also tryin’ my best.”

Lee SamSoon’s accent was savory and leisure could be felt from it. It was a thin sound like a girl but when an accent came out, a special attractiveness could be felt from hehr.

KangYoon asked her about her current situation for a brief time before going into topic.

“Why don’t we do a performance?”

“A perf’ mance? Why so suddenly?”

“It’s too much to think of it as a performance, so... just think of it as a presentation. We will just lightly put on the music in the street and sing. How about it?”

“I’m good.”

Lee SamSoon was refreshing. Her voice was also bright as if she wasn’t nervous.

“Good. Then shall we go?”

“Ya mean now?”

“Yes.”

KangYoon’s decision was very quick. He immediately got the key to the storage room and packed the equipments before going to Hongdae where street performances were everywhere.

Befitting its name of ‘The Walk of Youth’, Hongdae had a lot of people. The street filled with people was bustling with activity.

“Sir, there’s sure a lotta people.”

While moving the various equipments like the mixer, Lee SamSoon was busying herself with looking around the place as if she was curious about everything. Company, dorm, Company, dorm – to her who had repeated such a life, this street was wonder itself.

“There are. There seems good.”

KangYoon pointed towards a square.

When they finished setting the mixer, the amplifier, the camera, and the microphone, etc... People started gathering while wondering what was going on.

“Ah. Ah. I’m doin’ a mic’ test. Tester~.”

“Kukukuk.” (Muffled laughter)

When Lee SamSoon’s savory voice was projected through the microphone, some people muffled their laughs. However, Lee SamSoon didn’t feel down and smiled. Instead, she smiled more brightly and waved her hands to the people. Very naturally.

‘As expected.’

When he looked at that figure, KangYoon was reassured of his previous thoughts. The people were all laughing but they couldn’t take their eyes off her. A cute girl who uses accent, and even

someone who doesn't feel down at that. Lee SamSoon had a natal star quality. Rather than feeling down, her mood became even more lively and she was about to have a talk show with the people if someone didn't stop her.

When preparations ended, Lee SamSoon officially greeted the people.

“Hello!”

“Puhahahaha!!”

“I'm Lee SamSoon. I'm a trainee if MG Entertainment, and I came'ere to perform.”

Although it was small, cheers started erupting from the crowd. A cute girl was speaking confidently with an accent. An accent that didn't match her appearance was giving off attractiveness. KangYoon was also holding back his laughter.

“I'm thinkin' of doin' a performance'ere. Is it alright?”

“Oooh!! Pull off an '[Ummunna](#)'!!”

“That will be difficult since I'm weak at [trot](#).”

Lee SamSoon laughed off the half-jokes that the audience said. The setting ended soon, and KangYoon gave a signal.

‘Let's start.’

‘Yes.’

KangYoon started the music. Then, Lee SamSoon's voice started ringing throughout the square through the microphone.

It's strange — I can't hide it this heart — What should I do ——

The lively and light singing of a girl spread out through the square. The feeling or the tone of the accent was all gone.

‘Yes. It's this!!’

KangYoon rejoiced in his heart. People started clapping when they were surprised at Lee SamSoon's complete change in image.

The people who thought that they were here for a comedy also became absorbed.

‘It’s this!!’

KangYoon turned the camera through the remote control and didn’t forget to capture the reactions of the audience. The usual accent are gone without a trace when she sings. It was thanks to Lee SamSoon’s hard effort. This was the reason he picked Lee SamSoon. White light emitted from her already and made the people dance.

KangYoon smiled when he saw her having a high-five with the people he saw for the first time.

The next day.

It was the usual planning conference but today, the characteristics were different. Usually, the planning team and the stage production team and the other staff would gather and have a meeting, but today, an order came from above for even the Directors to gather. It was because KangYoon had asked Chairman Won JinMoon.

“Hmm, to think you want the Directors here too... It seems there’s something interesting, Team Leader Lee.”

Chairman Won JinMoon asked KangYoon while entering the wide conference room.

“I called them here since I have something to show to them.”

“I look forward to it.”

Chairman Won JinMoon lightly placed his hand on KangYoon shoulders when entering. He was having a better impression of KangYoon as time went past. His work was very clear, and more importantly, unpredictable so it was quite interesting.

After the Chairman, the President, followed by the Directors all entered. When they all came in, this planning conference produced

a heavy atmosphere that wouldn't lose out to a usual Director's meeting. When everybody was here, KangYoon pointed the screen with a laser pointer and started the meeting.

“Directors, President, Chairman. Thank you for your attendance today. The reason I gathered you here today is to talk about the finalization of the next generation girl group members.”

At KangYoon's words, the Directors started whispering to each other. President Lee HyunJi spoke amidst of that.

“Interesting. Please begin.”

President Lee HyunJi urged KangYoon. The next generation girl group project was an important business that would decide the company's future. This needed approval from the Chairman, the President, the board of Directors. Moreover, this was a planning conference. But when KangYoon said he had something to show them, they were all interested.

“Then let me begin.”

KangYoon started showing the materials he prepared one by one. This member was chosen for this reason and there is such data and I plan to go with this concept in the future – He added some additional materials to support them. Due to being a meeting, the Directors would usually interfere a lot, but due to the well prepared materials, there were no such things

However, the problem began at the end.

“Finally, it's Lee SamSoon. To briefly summarize, Lee SamSoon is an inferior student in MG Entertainment. The problem was her accent and her appearance. However, there are no problems with her skills. Appearance would be solved in due time with management....”

“Wait.”

Director Jung HyunTae raised his hand. He showed a completely different side to him from just until now, when he kept silent.

“You said there was no problem with her skills. However, everyone here knows the problem with her stubborn accent. When I looked into it, not only the trainers, but even the President mentioned it during the audition but it seems she still haven’t fixed it. Wouldn’t this be interpreted as that she might be going against the company in the future? Is there a reason to select a trainee that might bring up problems even though there are other good alternatives?”

“I already said that there’s no problem with her performance. And also, to say that she will go against the company in the future just because she hasn’t fixed her accent is too big of a conjecture. Trainee Lee SamSoon never brought trouble during her 3 years as a trainee. I think the reason of ‘she might rebel against the company’ is insufficient.”

“You...”

Director Jung HyunTae gritted his teeth. Team Leader Lee KangYoon didn’t tremble or lower his head when he was in front of the directors. He spoke what he needed to and they were clearly backed up by evidence. Director Jung HyunTae could feel that his face was hot when his own words collapsed. An insult like this in an official place like this...

“It seems the Directors are doubting about trainee Lee SamSoon. I have something to show you. Would you have a look at this?”

KangYoon played the video he recorded last night.

Chapter 18: Blowing Suspicions Away (2)

— It's strange — I can't hide it this heart — What should I do —

From the video, Lee SamSoon's figure of singing and high five-ing the crowd flowed out.

The figure of Lee SamSoon going into the crowd, having fun and even playing around with them broke their impressions of the 'countryside' Lee SamSoon. The boyish charm kept attracting attention.

KangYoon spoke while the video was playing.

“Lee SamSoon has a charm which attracts the crowd. If it's like that on the street, then I think I don't even need to mention her star quality. I selected her due to this possibility. An ingenuous country girl, but a 180 degrees turnaround when she grabs the microphone, an onion like girl who has a new side to her the more you peel. There are countless marketable elements. I think it's a loss for the company to let this opportunity go.”

As if it was all planned, the video ended as KangYoon finished speaking. Silence flowed for a moment. The Directors all whispered to each other to share their opinions.

Director Jung HyunTae, who was enduring his anger, seemed to have calmed down as he spoke quite calmly.

“First, I applaud Team Leader Lee for digging out a talented trainee like that.”

“Thank you.”

“To think you dug out a buried trainee like that... I feel that your eyes are amazing. Even so, if we consider time and money, I think it's better to use an already bloomed talent rather than blooming hidden talents. Isn't it good if we can catch the preparation period, funding, and even the intention of planning?”

KangYoon instantly realized Director Jung HyunTae's intentions. He indirectly said what he said last time in his office. It was just toned down, but he was basically saying – ‘why don't we change her?’. KangYoon endured the fire flaring inside his heart and calmly spoke.

“The time now is not the time for saving but a time for investment. Wasn't MG Entertainment a company which invested in its singers in the beginning, no matter who the singer was?”

“E... even so, isn't it better if we save and bring out the same effect? Please consider it. Everyone, I know a good trainee.”

This time, Director Jung HyunTae tried to induce agreement from other people, but everyone just clicked their tongues. KangYoon decided to strike the nail. A breach of rights like this would surely happen again in the future. KangYoon put down the laser pointer he was holding.

“Director. I provided a reason and sufficient proof that trainee Lee SamSoon has the ability and the possibility for growth. I will consider it if you provide me a clear reason. However, isn't saying that Lee SamSoon is no good right now the same as not having listened to my story? I think this is no good.”

“Wha... What?!”

Director Jung HyunTae's voice rose abruptly. However, KangYoon was still calm.

“Please tell me the reason why you recommend that trainee. Then, I will compare her with trainee Lee SamSoon and consider a more worthy selection. This is my job. If the directors have the rights to approve and disapprove, then the rights for selection is mine. I appreciate the advice you gave me, but I respectfully decline your request.”

“Wha, What?! You?!”

Director Jung HyunTae abruptly rose up from his seat.

KangYoon spoke calmly, but he was basically saying ‘you don’t have any reason behind your words’. This was an insult. A conference where the one with the biggest voice won only happened in small companies. It didn’t work in a place like this.

“Sit. Director Jung.”

“I.... I’m sorry.”

“See me later.”

In the end, Director Jung HyunTae, who raised his voice in agitation, had to close his eyes due to Chairman Won JinMoon’s low voice. He was too agitated that he went overboard. Even a Team Leader was, in the end, an employee. He thought that KangYoon would die down a little when a Director talked to him, but KangYoon instead talked back like nothing happened. The results of blurting something he shouldn’t have due to his agitation were serious. His shoulders drooped thinking what kind of consequences and wrath he had to bear later.

Chairman Won JinMoon turned his eyes towards KangYoon.

“I already approved. They all have sufficient reason. Especially, using a visual material like a street performance to show us her possibility. That was interesting.”

“Thank you, Chairman.”

“It’s your turn now, President Lee.”

Chairman Won JinMoon passed the baton to President Lee HyunJi.

“I was doubtful even when I was signing this plan after receiving the report. I also judged that Lee SamSoon was an element of worry. I originally planned to decline this paper until this worry disappeared. Although I did sign, I was quite unsettled... but you blow away our worries like this, huh.”

President Lee HyunJi was satisfied. KangYoon didn’t disappoint

her like he did last time. She seemed satisfied as she lightly clapped and gathered attention.

“How is it, everyone? Do we need another Directors’ meeting? Let’s decide it here.”

At President Lee HyunJi’s words, the Directors all shook their heads. They didn’t want to have another meeting due to the same matter. Even Directors hated meetings. They were all workers too. Having gotten an approval from everyone, President Lee HyunJi turned her gaze to KangYoon.

“From today on, I approve of the next generation girl group project. Team Leader Lee KangYoon. Please do your best.”

Along with President Lee HyunJi’s declaration, the Directors’ claps rang out inside the conference room. KangYoon coolly turned something that may have been his first crisis into trust and ended the meeting.

KangYoon, who left earlier than usual, called HeeYoon right away to come to a famous department store.

“It’s so good to walk hand in hand with you, oppa.”

Under the bright light of the department store, HeeYoon’s already white face shined even whiter. Her white face without blemish even without makeup, and the thin body was a symbol of a girl who needs to be protected.

“Do you need anything?”

“I’m alright, alright. Let’s buy your suit first.”

“Oppa has a lot of clothes.”

“Lies. I already saw that your closet was empty.”

He called her here to buy clothes for her, but HeeYoon was stubborn in buying her brother’s clothes first. In the end, KangYoon was dragged by HeeYoon from the women’s corner to the men’s corner on the floor above.

“Your brother’s so handsome. You must be proud.”

“Of course I’m proud.”

KangYoon’s heart became warm when he saw HeeYoon confidently boasting about him to the store staff while choosing clothes. Although, he had to go through suffering of having to try on countless clothes thanks to that...

KangYoon said to come again later since he didn’t have money but HeeYoon was stubborn to the end and they ended up buying a shirt. Of course, it was KangYoon’s. KangYoon, after buying his clothing headed to the women’s corner again. He planned to buy clothes for his sister no matter what happened today.

“Huh? Lee HeeYoon?”

“Kim SeJin.”

But then, KangYoon and HeeYoon met 4 female students in uniforms in front of the store. They were wearing the same uniform as HeeYoon. They were lively high school girls with pins in their hair and wearing sweaters.

“Are you HeeYoon’s friends?”

“Who are you?”

KangYoon was about to say that he was HeeYoon’s older brother but HeeYoon suddenly grabbed his hand.

“Oppa, let’s go.”

“Uh? Huh?”

KangYoon was dragged by HeeYoon who strongly pulled him suddenly. At the unusual figure, KangYoon was confused.

“HeeYoon? What is it? Aren’t they your friends?”

“.....”

“HeeYoon?”

“They’re just classmates.”

KangYoon felt something strange from HeeYoon's words. So he asked further.

"HeeYoon. Are they perhaps bullying you?"

"It's not like that?"

"Then?"

"...They aren't bad people."

HeeYoon tried to not talk anymore. HeeYoon always did her best to show her bright side to KangYoon and KangYoon knew that well. But to think she would become this down... KangYoon's heart ached.

As a change of mood, the two sat down in a café. After ordering a cup of coffee and a sweet smoothie, they chatted a lot before KangYoon stood up to go to the toilet.

But then, he heard something strange while heading towards the toilet.

"Hey, hey. What's HeeYoon doing here?"

"I don't know. Did she come here to eat?"

"Hey, hey. I don't know about anything else, but someone buy some clothes for her. Those old clothes are so dirty."

"Leave it. I heard that her household is so poor that they barely have enough money for her dialysis. Let's not tease her for her clothes."

"Wow, lady. You're so cool, aren't ya?"

It was HeeYoon's friends from last time. The girls didn't recognize KangYoon as they were absorbed in chatting.

'HeeYoon's uniform. It was a hand-me-down, wasn't it.'

They didn't even have enough money to afford a uniform so HeeYoon's uniform was found from the uniforms her seniors left behind. They fixed and sewed the uniform for her to wear for 3

years so it was as old as it could be. KangYoon's heart ached when he thought about his sister's tattered sleeves. He hated himself for not noticing things like these.

KangYoon headed straight back without doing his business.

“Oppa, what is it?”

“HeeYoon. Let's go.”

“Huh?”

HeeYoon was dragged by KangYoon to the 5th floor without even getting to finish her coffee. It was a uniform store within the department store. KangYoon took out his card and bought a uniform for HeeYoon.

“Oppa, why are you buying a new uniform for me?”

“They are too old.”

“I'm alright, oppa.”

“.....”

However, KangYoon didn't speak anymore. No.

This was the start.

“Oppa, this is too expensive.”

“Oppa, how can we buy this?”

“Oppa, it's alright.”

“Oppa,...”

KangYoon started going around all the clothing stores while grabbing HeeYoon's hand. HeeYoon put down the clothes even if it was pretty after looking at the price tag, but KangYoon was different.

“Please give us these.”

He picked up anything and everything that HeeYoon seemed to like. He bought enough for the old closet at the house to become

full. HeeYoon was shocked and kept holding him back, but KangYoon repeatedly said that it was alright.

And after 2 hours passed, KangYoon's hand was full of HeeYoon's clothes.

“Oppa, let's return this all tomorrow.”

HeeYoon said worriedly while leaving the department store. However, KangYoon shook his head.

“These. Are all yours.”

HeeYoon still seemed to not believe the clothes on in KangYoon's hands as she had a dumbfounded face. She clearly knew she couldn't even dream of this due to the dialysis fee and medical fees, so no surprises there. Moreover, every single piece of clothing was expensive. Brand name products that she couldn't even think about normally were lined up in front of her.

“HeeYoon, Oppa earned some money this time. You don't need to worry about anything and just wear it. You know the work I did with JooAh last time? I received a special bonus from that.”

“Then you should've saved it. Didn't you use too much money today?”

“It's alright. We need some clothes for you anyway. And...”

HeeYoon nagged him but KangYoon was all smiles. Only the little sister worried about her older brother. KangYoon tightened his hands grabbing HeeYoon since he liked that warmth.

“We. Are going to move soon.”

“Move? How?”

“You know that the previous work went so well. I'm looking for one. We're going to move to a closer place to the school and workplace. It will be soon, so endure it a little longer, okay?”

“Oppa...”

HeeYoon's eyes teared up. It wasn't simply because of the clothes and the house. It was because she thought about how much her brother had suffered to buy all these things. HeeYoon silently hugged KangYoon.

"Oppa, you worked hard."

"Let's become happy. Oppa will send you to college to."

"Oppa..."

"HeeYoon, you should live however you want. I will cure your illness to. Okay?"

HeeYoon teared up.

This kind of older brother. Where would she meet another one? Her tears wetted KangYoon's back.

"...Thanks."

"Don't mention it. Let's go."

HeeYoon tried to carry some of the stuff but KangYoon didn't let her. He didn't want to see HeeYoon carrying luggage with her feeble hands. HeeYoon spoke to KangYoon to give her some of the luggage the entire time, but KangYoon refused till the end.

Like that, the siblings slowly headed home. The wind was cold, but their hearts were warm.

"Hey, Oppa."

"Yes? Why?"

"I have something I want."

"What is it?"

"JooAh-unni's signed CD."

KangYoon already gave her a signature. But a signed CD... Perhaps due to the influence of KangYoon working with JooAh, but HeeYoon also felt familiarity with her. Admiration that JooAh pioneered her path confidently unlike her also played a role.

“I understand. It seems like HeeYoon likes JooAh a lot nowadays.”

“JooAh-unni is awesome. Cool. Especially, the Japanese songs were so awesome. Is it because you made it, Oppa?”

“You can kiss-up too?”

“Oppa, it hurts.”

KangYoon hung his arm over HeeYoon’s shoulders while playing around. HeeYoon poked KangYoon’s waist as a form of fighting back. When KangYoon turned pale, she laughed loudly.

“And you know? JooAh isn’t ‘unni’. You two are of the same age.”

“I just want to call her unni. Isn’t she cool?”

“What?”

“Hahaha.”

KangYoon and HeeYoon headed home while playing around

Next day.

Early morning, HeeYoon headed to school after bidding KangYoon farewell. Her house and school were far apart so when she entered the classroom, most of the students were already in their seats.

HeeYoon opened the door to the classroom and entered. However, today, a lot of gazes directed at HeeYoon was strange.

‘Look at Lee HeeYoon’s clothes. What’s up with that?’

‘Look at her bag. Isn’t that Raccoon? The 1 million won (≈870USD) bag?!’

‘Lee HeeYoon, her looks ain’t half bad now.’

HeeYoon was surprised when she saw that her classmates were all looking at her with strange gazes when they didn’t even spare a

glance before. Usually, she would be treated like a non-existent person, but today was different.

When she sat, her seat partner approached her.

“HeeYoon.”

“Why? Something up?”

Her seat partner didn’t even talk to her usually. But to think she talked to her now... HeeYoon turned her head away.

“You’re so pretty today. You should’ve done this from the start.”

“Thanks.”

“Yesterday...”

That was just the beginning. At breaktime and lunch time, people who didn’t usually approach her started gathering around her one by one. The neat and luxurious looking uniform along with HeeYoon’s long hair appealed to everyone as a weak girl and provoked their protective hearts. They were curious about her until now, but the tattered uniform and the poor image prevented them from approaching but all that changed now.

HeeYoon didn’t even act weak even though she was ill. That was important. They distanced themselves from her, but they didn’t hate her so the classmates all came to HeeYoon to converse with her and they became her friends. From clothes, they moved onto famous celebrities and they became friends in no time.

‘Oppa. Thank you.’

Even while talking and laughing with her friends at school, HeeYoon still thought about her brother who should be working hard right now. The brother that brings her happiness like these, KangYoon. HeeYoon was thankful that she had an older brother like this.

Chapter 19: Unintended School Conquest (1)

Jung MinAh, who lived at home usually, was slightly dissatisfied with the forceful cohabitation due to the girl group project. She didn't want to miss the food her parents made for her, but it wasn't like she could miss this opportunity. In the end, she packed up her belongings on the verge of tears and came to the dorms.

However, the true suffering just began.

"Nice ta meet ya. Lee SamSoon."

"Y... yeah. I'm Jung MinAh."

Lee SamSoon, the person who shared the room with her, and is the same as age as her.

To Jung MinAh, she, who used a savory Chungcheong province accent, was a big trouble.

"I use this bed and you use this bed, kay?"

"Y... yeah. But SamSoon."

"And I sleep at 11. And ya?"

"Ahaha. I..."

"You gotta sleep early and wake early. That's how your breasts get bigger."

SamSoon's slow pace of words was a first for Jung MinAh. Moreover, she was cool with everything. A slow pace on top of being a tomboy when she didn't even get used to the accent... Jung MinAh felt that her neck became stiff.

"Uhh..."

"Please ta'care of me from now. Oh yeah, MinAh. You, are you close with ol'man KangYoon?"

"O, ol'man?"

MinAh didn't like accents that much. She didn't know whether

to laugh or cry. She only heard rumors about Lee SamSoon, but when she met her for real, she couldn't laugh. Their affinity was bad.

“Ye? Or nay? Why so silent? Such a shame.”

“Oh, it's nothing. Rather than close...”

“Ayy, wha. You ain't close?”

Someone might say it's savory accent, but Jung MinAh didn't want to accept Lee SamSoon, who was far from being refined.

‘What the hell is up with this girl?! You want me to live with her from now?!’

When she thought that she would have to live with this countryside tomboy from now on, Jung MinAh's mentality collapsed. She felt her future becoming dark

Everything was approved and the girl group project began. An exclusive planning team and a training team was created and KangYoon distributed their work. A large scale project since the JooAh project had began.

Everyone was busy. The selected girls were busy moving into their dorms and practicing after their personal schedule was made, and the employees felt their bodies aching due to all the overtime work. The girls were also looked after carefully starting with the diet. Unlike with JooAh, who could look after herself, KangYoon was tight with managing those candidates.

“...They are practicing well.”

One week later, in a meeting.

KangYoon was holding the report from each team and was speaking.

“I told you at the beginning but we will train them with teamwork as the focus for a while. They might not know anything but they have strong prides so they will fight a lot. You may not be

able to stop the fighting but please manage them well so that they can properly get over it afterwards.”

“Yes.”

“Any other opinions?”

There wasn't anything big. KangYoon ordered them but he didn't go into detail. Raise their teamwork, do a lot of group practice. I won't get involved with the method. He used the method which respected the way the employees work, but at the same time, achieved the goal.

“We will end the meeting here.”

KangYoon ended the meeting quickly. There wasn't much group data about the trainees so there wasn't much to discuss about teamwork, which was a very important element in the beginning. However, even this would be discussed starting next week.

After the meeting ended, the people left KangYoon's office like a tide. After that, KangYoon wrote a report and headed to the president's office directly.

“Welcome, Team Leader KangYoon.”

President Lee HyunJi greeted KangYoon. It was the first report after the project was decided, so she seemed to expect a lot as it could be seen that she was slightly excited. While drinking the coffee her secretary brought her, she started reading the report.

After reading KangYoon's report, she signed in approval, satisfied.

“It's good. Thanks for your work.”

“Thank you.”

KangYoon briefly reported about the progress. Training would be carried like this in the future, and they will focus on teamwork – these kind of things.

“When can we see the final result?”

“I’m expecting 1 year.”

“Isn’t that to tight?”

President Lee HyunJi tilted her head in confusion as she expected 2 or 3 years. If it’s the KangYoon now, it was better for him to have a safe and steady result even if it took long rather than a fast result. President Lee HyunJi wanted to know the reason why KangYoon said 1 year even though he didn’t need to be so pressed about results.

“Solo singers had strength until the early 2000s but the stage is changing gradually. Group singers, especially in their teens and 20s are surpassing their position. Of course, solo singers are better now but that will break soon. To do that, we need to prepare quickly.”

“Oho.”

President Lee HyunJi enjoyed these kind of talks with KangYoon. In her opinion, KangYoon had the eyes to read the era. President Lee HyunJi was also thinking something similar. However, she didn’t show it on the surface.

“Then I’ll take my leave.”

“Please work hard.”

KangYoon headed towards his own office after finishing the tea-time like report in the president’s office.

“Ahjussi!!”

However, there was a person in his office, when he thought there weren’t any. It was Jung MinAh.

“MinAh? Is something up?”

“Team Leader. I came since I have something to say.”

KangYoon was curious. The current Jung MinAh looked like she had a lot to say. She felt like a person with many things piled up. KangYoon told her to sit and started listening.

“I think I don’t fit with SamSoon. I can’t live in the same room as her.”

“Why?”

“From the way of living, or her accent... I don’t like anything about her. Team Leader. Can’t you change?”

It had only been one day since they started living together. However, Jung MinAh already came looking for him. KangYoon thought it was absurd but he pressed his urges down and spoke.

“And how many days has it been since you started living in the dorm?”

“...One day.”

“You can’t say you want to change rooms after just one day. Moreover, SamSoon didn’t do anything wrong. If you don’t have anything more to say, then please leave.”

KangYoon cut it clearly. Jung MinAh was a rare talent. But listening to a selfish request like this was not possible. KangYoon thought of these as training.

“Team Leader.”

“Go to practice.”

KangYoon didn’t speak anymore. He didn’t console her either. In these situations, he needed to come out strong. He thought like that. Although he knew that Jung MinAh felt sad, but for now, he needed to look at a bigger picture.

In the end, Jung MinAh left the office dejected. Of course, KangYoon also didn’t feel good. However, he needed to be clear cut about things like this unless he wanted problems popping up later. It was the lesson he learnt in his time as a manager for 7 years.

It was when KangYoon was about to finish the report.

The door suddenly opened.

“Tada!! Oppa, I have returned!!”

When KangYoon lifted his head in surprise, a girl with small stature loudly appeared with spread arms. It was JooAh. KangYoon sighed as if all energy left him.

“At least knock. Will you...”

“What is that reaction? You aren’t delighted to see me after such a long time?”

“Yeah, whatever. Good to see you.”

“Ah~. What the hell is this feeling like I’m being bowed to. I’m delighted to see you after such a long time.”

When JooAh expressed her disappointment, KangYoon laughed with a ‘pfft’. JooAh acted however she wanted in private places.

KangYoon, after finishing the little work he had, brewed tea right away.

“Thanks. But you’re horrible at brewing tea.”

“Just drink whatever you’re give, will you?”

“Hahaha, you know your sins, right?”

“Sins? What sins?”

“Eat and run with the Japan case. I will use this excuse until I die.”

JooAh wanted to keep working with KangYoon. Even though she created that much chaos in front of Chairman Won JinMoon, she didn’t get KangYoon back. JooAh, who had experienced a damage like this for the first time, had no choice but to give up, but she put it somewhere in her heart.

“That’s my fault?”

“I don’t know anything about that. My resentment is like the sea.”

“So audacious? Do whatever you want. First, forgetting that, give

me a signed CD.”

“Signed CD? Why?”

The topic changed and JooAh was curious about KangYoon’s request. She heard that KangYoon requested for her sign last time too. Of course, she put more effort into that sign than when she did it for other people. She signed on a photo – which there was only one of – so there was nothing more to speak about.

“I’m giving it to my little sister. She’s your fan.”

“Little sister? You had a little sister?”

“She’s the same age as you.”

“Oh, really? You’re quite far apart.”

“We are. Please.”

“I will, I will. But you know? I can’t give it to you now even if I wanted to. The 3rd batch was sold out so we’re onto the 4th.”

It was a problem even if the album sold too well. Well, although, thanks to that, the company was all smiles at the sales.

“Well then. Please.”

“Yeah, yeah. It’s your request.”

“Then I’ll believe you.”

After that JOoAh listened to KangYoon’s advice on what to do in the future. KangYoon talked to her about her attitude or the people she need to get along with. JooAh was naughty most of the time, but she did engrave what KangYoon said to the point that she wrote them all down.

After they talked for a long time, JooAh stood up after looking at the clock.

“Then I’ll take my leave. I need to get on the plane.”

“You’re busy, huh.”

“See you later. Don’t worry about that CD.”

When JooAh left, KangYoon was devoid of any strength as he just experienced a storm.

“Haa.. She is as lively as ever...”

JooAh left and KangYoon laughed.

Her grade changed and when the new semester started, HeeYoon felt good to go to school nowadays.

She made friends, and the number of people she talked to increased. She didn’t talk a lot, but it was a massive change compared to the past when she was quiet and felt like she didn’t exist. Perhaps due to this kind of change, liveliness filled HeeYoon’s face more than ever.

“Limit N to 10...”

Maths. A time of horror when everybody sleeps due to the sleeping drugs known as numbers and polygons.

HeeYoon resisted the urge and focused on the class.

‘It’s not easy.’

Of course, no matter how she looked at it, Maths wasn’t easy. The teacher solved all the questions but HeeYoon was stuck. HeeYoon raised her hand after trying numerous times.

“Excuse me, tea...”

It was the moment HeeYoon raised her hand to ask.

Vrooooooooooon!!

From the window, a loud engine sound could be heard.

“Huh? What is that car?!”

“Where, where?”

The students all ran to the window at the loud engine sound ringing out through the whole school. The surprised teacher also

ran to the window as if he just got hit with a missile.

However, outside the window, a red car that could only be seen on TVs was running through the school sports ground.

“That’s a Borsche!”

“For real? I’ll beat you up if it isn’t.”

“F*ck you. I bet my entire fortune on it.”

Car otakus were all excited. Why was an expensive car like that here, is there some rich tycoon in our school, etc. Various predictions started spreading.

And finally, the car stopped and a man and a woman stepped out.

“Hey, hey, hey!! That’s JooAh, JooAh!!”

“It’s JooAh!!”

“Sh*t!! F*ck!! It’s the real JooAh!!”

The hottest celebrity nowadays. The first celebrity who the students admired the most and was jealous of the most – JooAh – was slowly walking towards the school.

Chapter 20: Unintended School Conquest (2)

Lunch time.

KangYoon was at a chinese restaurant with Chairman Won JinMoon and President Lee HyunJi. The sweet and sour pork of that place was first class so it was a place that Chairman Won JinMoon visited a lot.

“This place is known for its sweet and sour pork. Let’s eat.”

The black soybean noodles and the sweet and sour pork which was hunger-provoking came out and they took up their chopsticks. Chairman Won JinMoon asked KangYoon while mixing the black soybean noodles.

“You said you had a little sister?”

“I do.”

“If she looks like you, then she will be a beauty. Why don’t you bring her here? Who knows, she might hit it off. Hahaha.”

Chairman Won JinMoon laughed. Of course, it was half joke, and half serious. As he knew that he had no bad intentions behind it, KangYoon laughed it out.

“Unfortunately, my sister doesn’t have any interest in the entertainment industry.”

“Well, that’s a shame. Isn’t that true, Miss HyunJi?”

“It is.”

“As hard as ever, eh.”

At the angled attitude of President Lee HyunJi, chairman Won JinMoon laughed. He didn’t want her so hard even at lunch time, but President Lee HyunJi was as hard as ever.

The three were eating when Chaiman Won JinMoon’s phone started dancing wildly. It was a call from the secretary office.

“What is it? What? JooAh is?”

At the word ‘JooAh’, both KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi stopped eating.

“Now that’s something. I understand.”

The call ended, and Chairman Won JinMoon turned his gaze towards KangYoon.

“KangYoon.”

“Yes, Chairman.”

“You know what JooAh did? Ha, well, what to say about this...”

“Did JooAh create a problem?”

KangYoon was confused. JooAh wasn’t a person to create trouble. She wasn’t gambling, nor dating, or had any strange interests... But Chairman Won JinMoon was grabbing his head as if he had a headache.

“It’s the first time I’ve seen this kind of situation in my life. They said she went to give your sister a CD. Sehyun high school, is that right?”

“What?”

KangYoon’s voice became high pitch. Was a plane struck by lightning in some clear skies?

“They said she made a newbie manager drive a Borsche and she went there while emitting the aura of a celebrith everywhere. Thanks to that, the school was paralyzed and it’s all chaos now. They said even the police was dispatched... Hey, KangYoon, KangYoon!!”

Before the savoriness of the sweet and sour pork disappeared, KangYoon left the restaurant.

“Thank you. Yes, thank you.”

Take a picture, then sign, then take a picture, then sign.

A signing event was already taking place in HeeYoon's school.

"Sob!! I love you!!"

"Me too."

JooAh hugged a male fan skillfully and showed them extreme fan service. There was one manager and no guardian, but she was very daring.

"JooAh-unni..."

"Just believe in me. And what unni. We're friends."

HeeYoon looked at such JooAh with worry, but JooAh winked as if it was alright. The school was considerate and even stopped the school and thanks to that, HeeYoon's third year, 4th class was filled with people to get a sign from JooAh.

"YEON JOOAH!!"

But then, a sharp voice that pierced through the crowd exploded. The students whispered to each other about what his identity was but the person pierced the human wave, ignoring all those.

"Hey, it's here, here."

Moreover, JooAh was calm.

The one who went through the students with difficulty and stood in front of JooAh was KangYoon.

"Oppa."

"HeeYoon."

When KangYoon was panting while standing in front of JooAh, HeeYoon was at her side. They were even crossing arms as if they became close already. Surrounding them, people were standing in a circle, and the people who wanted a sign were standing in a line.

"Get out, it's my turn."

KangYoon was about to be pushed out even though he came here with difficulty.

“Pfft.”

At that figure, both JooAh and HeeYoon laughed.

“I’m sorry. You’ll get your sign soon This is a Team Leader from my company. He’s not here to receive a sign.”

“Oooh. Okay.”

“And he’s also HeeYoon’s older brother.

Not only the male student waiting for the sign, everybody in the classroom widened their eyes.

‘I knew something was up. JooAh was sticking to HeeYoon for that reason.’

‘Team Leader? How high is that? There’s...’

‘Wow...’

Envious eyes, amazed eyes, dazed eyes, etc... the gazes looking at HeeYoon was various. The look of the people who thought that JooAh crossing arms with HeeYoon as a fan service changed.

“JooAh, why are you speaking...”

“What’s wrong with it? HeeYoon. You can be proud of your brother. The one who made me hit it big in Japan was KangYoon-oppa. If it wasn’t for him, I might not be able to go around like this, you know?”

“Really?”

This time, HeeYoon’s eyes widened. KangYoon’s face tickled when he heard praises in front of his sister.

“JooAh, stop sugarcoating it. Let’s go already. The students have classes.”

“Noooooooo~~~~!!”

KangYoon was about to take JooAh out when he heard the exaggerated reactions from the surroundings. It was a shout by all the students with one heart. KangYoon was surprised.

“Students should study. This...”

“See, oppa? This is my popularity.”

“.....”

KangYoon, in the end, smacked JooAh’s head.

“Ouch!! It hurts!!”

“Please let me hit you today. Come here!!”

“Hiik!! Violent Team Leader go away!!”

JooAh produced a speed to quickly hide behind HeeYoon, and a scene was created. This lively scene was naturally recorded by the students.

Later, one of the photos from the students’ phones with JooAh being smacked by KangYoon would become a legend with the title ‘JooAh’s Humiliation’ and become a topic.

“This is not it!!”

Lee JunYeol threw the papers to his manager. Manager Yu SeungCheol was insulted badly, but he endured as if he was used to it.

“Hyung, you’re saying this is no good, and that is no good. It’s the 10th plan now. We changed the planner 3 times already.”

“Argh, I don’t know. I’m about to go crazy.”

Lee JunYeol roughly bit the cigar and spat out smoke. His stuffy heart came out as smoke. While looking at that dark expression, manager Yu SeungCheol calmly explained.

“They said that this is the best choice considering our situation and budget. Hyung, this is enough. If you keep being stubborn, then comebacks or whatever – they will all become bubbles.”

“So you want me to have a comeback on a stage like this? I’m Sedy. You are doing this to me too?”

Sedy.

Real name Lee JunYeol.

As a singer on his 4th year, he was a solo singer who climbed to the top once. And such a person was trying to have a comeback stage in 2 years. They tried to have a showcase for the comeback stage but there weren't enough budget, and to request TV stations, there weren't any stages he liked. In the end, they chose an open radio broadcast, but now, it was the stage that was the problem. As Lee JunYeol trashed every stage sketch he had a look at, the one whose heart was boiling was manager Yu SeungCheol.

"If you say everything is no good, then it really will be bad. Hyung, at this rate, you'll have to delay your comeback."

"Solving that is your job."

"Ah, I'm going crazy..."

He was stubborn like a little child and he didn't listen to words. In the end, manager Yu SeungCheol was only boiling his heart until he came out.

"Hey, SeungCheol, did you persuade him?"

Outside, President Kim TaeHoon of Duka Entertainment, which Lee JunYeol belonged to, was waiting. He approached thinking 'what if'.

"He doesn't listen. President, what should we really do about that?"

"In the end, it's this. Ah. I'm going to go crazy. That dumbass... We've already done the distribution contract with MG, so if the comeback isn't done, it will be all ruined."

President Kim TaeHoon was unsettled. Comeback was literally advertisement. What good is there if there's no advertisement even if an album comes out? The office will be flooded with those albums. He rapidly spinned his head.

If a person was cornered, he would do something.

“SeungCheol.”

“Yes, President.”

“I’ll go visit MG for a bit.”

“You want to delay the distribution contract?”

“Are you crazy? Are they people who would say they will do that just because we said so? I’ll request for help. Who was it that made JooAh big again in Japan?”

“Lee KangYoon? No way, how can we meet that kind of person? President? President!!”

Manager Yu SeungCheol didn’t even finish speaking but President Kim TaeHoon took his blazer and ran outside. He was desperate. He needed to hurry.

There was an incident that was not an incident with JooAh, but KangYoon’s company life was peaceful.

In the morning, he would receive a report about the girl group project and after ordering some improvements, he would organize some materials. In the afternoon, he would go down to check on the practice rooms and he will have a meeting with the planning team and the budget team about the project. After leaving work, he would have dinner with HeeYoon and end finish up. And his day would be over.

It was a repetition of these kind of days. Without a big problem, KangYoon’s days flowed like water.

Until one day, it was when KangYoon went up to the President’s office for a report. President Lee HyunJi approved of the report and put it on the side. And KangYoon said goodbye before leaving.

“Would you take a seat? There is something to talk about.”

At the unusual development, KangYoon was confused. A talk

with the President. Originally, talking with your superiors was a nervous thing. Moreover, President Lee HyunJi showed manners of making the coffee herself. His nervousness increased.

“Do you remember about the concert team I talked to you last time?”

“The thing where you told me to take something up if I had time while doing the girl group project?”

“Yes, that. The concert team which only worked for the company will grow in size and I’m planning to operate a specialized concert team. I want you, Team Leader KangYoon, to supervise that.”

Concert team. It referred to planning, producing, etc a concert performance as a whole. A big company like MG Entertainment had enough surplus resources to operate a concert team by itself. If it operated solely for the company before, now they were thinking of expanding to receive requests from outside and do it professionally.

“President. Working on the girl group project and on the concert team is in no way easy.”

“Of course rewards will follow. You checked your bank account after the work with JooAh ended, right?”

KangYoon stepped back once, but President Lee HyunJi stepped forward towards him. And with money too. KangYoon was shocked at the number of digits he saw for the first time on his bank account, and he could do various things for HeeYoon.

President Lee HyunJi continued speaking.

“I believe that Team Leader Lee has ambition. If this concert team goes well, I’m thinking of making it an independent corporation.

KangYoon gulped. A team I was in will become an independent corporation. This was something huge for a salaryman. Of course, a successful career wasn’t everything for KangYoon. But there was

merit in that he could look higher.

“It’s a cool-headed decision from judging Team Leader KangYoon until now. If you weren’t here, I would have never thought of activating the concert team for real. Girl group, concerts – I offer you in thinking that we can do both. Let’s do this together.”

“.....”

KangYoon hesitated. This was definitely an opportunity. Trap? That wasn’t possible. However he still thought over it carefully. He also thought of his ‘past’.

‘I did hear that there was a concert team in MG Entertainment. However, I didn’t hear about its size. If they wanted to raise it, then I would have definitely known about it. But raise it like this?’

In his knowledge, the scale of the concert team of MG Entertainment wasn’t big. And so, they sometimes outsourced important concerts. But to raise that team...

Un unknown future was definitely a source of fear. However, KangYoon felt excited.

“I will try.”

Concert team. A new challenge.

KangYoon nodded his head strongly.

President Lee HyunJi seemed satisfied and held out a paper.

“This is the first work for the concert team.”

KangYoon received it.

[Sedy comeback request.]

‘Sedy? Wait, that delinquent?’

From the start, it was a tough customer. Thinking that doing a concert together won’t be easy, KangYoon resolved himself.

Chapter 21: A Plan That Overcomes Blanks

(1)

‘Sedy, who has a comeback stage after 2 years, splendidly ruins the comeback and disappears.’

KangYoon, who came back to the office, opened the envelope and fell into thought. Sedy, who made women’s heart flutter with his mellow voice and the emotional songs that matched it after his debut, went well for 2 year before disappearing suddenly. He came back after 2 years, but he received bad criticisms such as his voice changed or he lost the feeling, etc... and ruined every single album he released.

‘The first concert is unlucky, eh.’

This season was definitely the season when he recovers after 2 years of blanks. Meaning that his time was over. However, as he thought that it wasn’t good to reject the work without even meeting in person, KangYoon decided that he would decide after he gathered some materials.

He searched the internet and requested the reference room about the materials related to Sedy. Soon, materials about Sedy piled up on KangYoon’s desk.

‘This is enough for him to get doomed.’

After having a look at the materials, KangYoon sighed. Sedy earned too much money within a short period of time. He made a hit as soon as he debuted and the money and popularity raised his arrogance. In other words, he had star complex. The star complex made him sink rapidly and eventually, he played around too much without managing himself well and he got sick.

‘His throat was hurt. That’s why he rested for 2 years.’

While looking at the documents categorized as important, KangYoon shook his head. In any case, aftereffects of throat

injuries are very serious. The possibility to recover to the former voice was very faint. Even if he could sing, there was no way he could know that the people would accept the change in the voice.

KangYoon closed the documents. The priority was to meet the singer himself. Although he knew the future of the singer known as Sedy, he had never met him.

KangYoon contacted Duka entertainment right away.

“Greetings. I’m Lee KangYoon from MG Entertainment.”

As if they had already received a call, the work progressed smoothly. Sedy’s manager, called Yu SeungCheol, was very kind and he lowered himself, saying that he would attend to KangYoon. KangYoon didn’t delay and set a schedule and set off right away. Although he could tell them to come, KangYoon set off thinking that he need to have a look at the situation himself.

‘Was Duka Entertainment so small?’

KangYoon arrived in front of Duka Entertainment. Duka Entertainment was on the second floor of a small 3 level building. He heard that they were doing well once, and they had enough money to rent the whole building, but now they only had one floor. KangYoon felt strange and went inside.

‘Geh, what is this? Smell of smoke?’

As soon as KangYoon entered, the stuffy smell of smoke stung his nose. KangYoon, who never expected to smell smoke in an entertainment company, creased his face.

“Gosh, smoke.”

“Excuse me...”

The man seemed surprised at KangYoon’s creased face as he took back his offered hand. KangYoon only looked at the man then and he became awkward.

“I’m sorry. It was a bit awkward.”

“No, It should be me who’s sorry. This is why I said to meet outside... Let me introduce myself. I’m called Yu SeungCheol and I’m in a position of a manager and the secretary of general affairs.

“Lee KangYoon.”

The person called Yu SeungCheol had a naïve expression and a chubby body. His personality looked good.

After a brief exchange of greetings, the two sat down and went into topic.

“The open broadcast, ‘FM and walking’ with the actress Jung ShinHye. It was at 6 o’clock on Saturday, right?”

“Yes. It’s in 3 weeks.”

“Did the TV station give you permission too?”

“We only received a time from the radio station. Sedy-hyung wants a lot of stage devices. Of course we know that it’s difficult, but ... Sigh...”

Manager Yu SeungCheol also seemed fed up with Sedy as he sighed. If one used too much stage devices on an open radio broadcast, then it would be a nuisance to other singers. But Sedy was stubbornly requesting it so he was fed up. KangYoon had a look at the demands slowly and spoke.

“Then it’s better to have a showcase.”

“To do that the money...”

...And they don’t have enough budget for it. KangYoon sighed.

“Since we’re using the same stage as other singers, we need to be considerate towards them. It’s a bit of a stretch to think that it is our own stage and mobilize so many devices and boast material superiority. Then you need to go with a showcase.”

“That’s why we requested of you. It’s because we can’t think up of a good method.”

KangYoon felt his head ache. What do they want to do... This – not enough money. That – it’s difficult. He was fed up.

“Then first, let’s meet Sedy. Where is he?”

“Uh, that....”

“Where is he?”

KangYoon looked around when a door opened with squealing sounds coming out from behind the door. Then a handsome man with short hair and a woman wearing tight clothes walked out while stuck together. It was the singer Sedy, Lee JunYeol.

“Hohoho, Oppa. So cool. So? What did you do then?”

“What do you mean? With a sledgehammer, I just...”

“Whoa, darling’s so manly.”

A low quality conversation, that was uncomfortable for even men to hear, went past. KangYoon was dumbfounded. Someone was here to work for him, and that same someone was playing around with woman...

“...I’ll take my leave.”

KangYoon didn’t have anything more to say. He had a look at the reason why Sedy failed in the ‘past’ he knew. He came to discuss the plan but the singer in question didn’t even show interest and had a woman beside him. It was obvious that such a singer would fail.

“Sorry? No, team leader. Wait, please hear...”

“If it’s such a person, he would fail in whatever he does. There’s nothing more to speak about.”

Manager Yu SeungCheol grabbed KangYoon in panic, but KangYoon returned. In his ‘past’ life, he had seen singers in his 10 years of continuous failure. No, he rolled around at the bottom of the industry in his 7 years as a manager before he went into planning. The people he saw from then failed, not from effort, but

from talent. However, that man called Sedy had the talent but no effort and he was rotting his own time. The thought that he should waste time on such a man didn't exist.

“Y, you're the concert planner that said you'll come today? Nice to meet you. I'm Sedy.”

However, as if ignoring KangYoon's words, Lee JunYeol offered a handshake as if nothing had happened. The smirk on the corner of his lips said ‘That's cute, do some more’.

“Hyung!! This person is...”

Manager Yu SeungCheol was shocked and blocked Sedy. However, KangYoon's anger was already at the limit. He stiffened his face and took a deep breath and met his eyes and spoke with a low voice.

“You're pathetic.”

“Oh?”

“You should be in the middle of practicing to warm up your voice now, but with a woman... I can estimate why this company became like this.”

“Team Leader!!”

When KangYoon provoked Sedy, Manager Yu SeungCheol was shocked and tried to hold KangYoon back. However, KangYoon, who was now angry, didn't intend to stop there.

“If it's the current Sedy, he will fail no matter what he does. I can declare that. I don't want to see him again.”

KangYoon then turned back. Fire was raging inside his heart. He didn't even want to think about that singer who smoked and played around with a woman,

“Team Leader. Please listen to my story.”

“I don't think there is a need to listen anymore. I'm sorry.”

Manager Yu SeungCheol clung desperately, but KangYoon left the place just like that.

However, even when KangYoon went back like that after insulting him, Sedy only smirked.

“What the hell is that guy? Ah, my luck must be bad. Isn’t it right, oppa”?

“...Hey.”

“What is it, oppa?”

“You go too.”

However, Lee JunYeol pushed away the woman he was playing around with for a long time. The woman complained as she didn’t know the reason before swearing at Sedy and leaving.

“Ah, hyung!! Do you even know who that person is!!? Ah, f*ck!!”

Manager Yu SeungCheol felt like he was about to go crazy. They had persuaded MG Entertainment after a long time. President Kim TaeHoon begged until his knees gave out to move the concert team. Of course, the distribution contract was also important. Now that they kicked away the hope they just begged for, he wanted to XX that problem child.

“That person just now, it’s that person, right?”

“What?”

Manager Yu SeungCheol was on his edge. However, Lee JunYeol ignored that and continued speaking.

“The one who said that he will make my comeback stage.”

“Yes. And you chased him away. Ah, really. That’s the guy who put JooAh on top of Japan. The one you talked about last time.”

“Oh, really?”

However, he didn’t seem to care. But then he thought again for a moment before speaking.

“Hey, SeungCheol.”

“Ah really. Why do you keep calling me?”

“Was there anyone who insulted me right in my face like that until now?”

“I don’t know, You went well before.”

“But he directly rejected, eh? That’s interesting.”

“What? Rejected?”

The next day.

President Lee HyunJi widened her eyes after she heard that KangYoon rejected the work with Sedy.

“What’s the reason for your rejection?”

“We don’t have anything to profit from this. Even though it’s the first work, it isn’t that good...”

“And what is your reason for your judgement?”

First work was very important. This was the first work that the concert team of MG Entertainment had received. They could only receive other work if this work went well. KangYoon wanted to say that Sedy’s ‘mentality is completely rotten’, but he held back since it wasn’t an objective material.

And so, KangYoon prepared a document and held it out towards President Lee HyunJi.

“His voice changed too much in his 2 years of rest. Even if we plan a stage for them and pull out, if words that the planned comeback singer failed comes out, then it may negatively affect us.”

“Sedy contains a risk – this is what you want to say, right?”

“That is so.”

“But a risk contains a return. Didn’t you succeed with JooAh last

time even with a risk?”

At that time, KangYoon had a clear proof. However, there was no proof of success now. Most of all, Sedy’s mentality was done for. KangYoon could still see the Sedy who came out with a woman in his arms.

“JooAh had the ability to take on the risks. Ability and support – both of these were in place. However, Sedy’s different. The company’s small, and his personal ability is also doubtful. I judged liked that.”

“I understand. If Team Leader Lee judged like that then...”

President Lee HyunJi nodded her head. She had trust in KangYoon. She knew that he had good eyes for people.

KangYoon headed to his office after reporting to the president’s office. The concert work ended without him even trying, but the rookie work was still underway. He turned on the computer to work on that.

However, the phone in his office started ringing. It was a call from the lobby.

“What is it?”

-Singer, Sedy, says he’s looking for you.

“Sedy is? I don’t have anything to speak to him so turn him back.”

-He says he will wait until you finish work.

Suddenly Lee JunYeol invaded and said he would wait. KangYoon was dumbfounded at the unpredicted incident, but he snorted.

Chapter 22: A Plan That Overcomes Blanks

(2)

“Hey, hey, hey. Isn’t that Sedy?”

“Sedy? Whoa. What’s he doing here?”

The trainees whispered to each other while looking at Lee JunYeol who was sitting with crossed legs on a sofa. The light shining from the window emphasized his already handsome face and it was all the rage, especially with the girl trainees.

‘Young ones. They’re cute.’

Lee JunYeol stayed in the lobby while giving out signatures and sometimes, advices, to the trainees. He spent time looking at the passerbys and playing games on his mobile phone. However, the person who said he contacted KangYoon didn’t appear.

“Is it not yet?”

“...He says for you to return.”

It was already the 10th time. Now, the lobby staff didn’t even contact KangYoon since they were fed up with it. At first, they called each time due to his looks and name value, but now that it was turning dark, their gazes turned into looks that were given to insects.

‘Ayy. Such an intersting guy.’

Lee JunYeol became curious about KangYoon. How could he meticulously ignore him like this. Of course he was angry. However, his curiosity was bigger. He was curious that KangYoon said that he would definitely fail despite living well until now.

“Ah, I’m doomed for today’s evaluation. SamSoon, how about you?”

“I failed too. And so refreshingly too. How about you, Jung?”

“...I’m Ailee, Jung is my surname.”

It was night, and the moon was already high when the last batch of trainees came out while chatting. It had been a long time since the lobby staff left work.

‘What is this? That guy’s still at work?’

Lee JunYeol was dumbfounded at the fact that KangYoon didn’t leave when even the trainees had left. But he didn’t want to return like this. He refused to yield, now that he came all the way here and he didn’t want to leave before seeing that face.

“...Sedy?”

It was only after a long while after the trainees left that the one who he wanted to see had appeared. It was KangYoon. This guy who didn’t even show himself even worked over time and left last.

“You...?!”

“You still didn’t go? I don’t have anything to speak to you.”

He was surprised that he waited until now, but KangYoon didn’t think much about it. He hadn’t the slightest thought that he would do a stage with him by changing that person. That only came out in books and movies. In this regard, KangYoon was realistic.

“I can’t get my head around it no matter how I think about it.”

“It has no relations to me. And why are you so impolite, you’re younger than me.”

KangYoon also didn’t hold back. There were people who crawled up when he stayed polite. Sedy was one of them.

Lee JunYeol was on the last stages of star complex, where he put everyone beneath his foot. KangYoon didn’t want to work with such a person. Lee JunYeol, who was looking at KangYoon for some time, laughed as if it never happened.

“Hahaha. You’re indeed interesting. Yes, Hyung. Cool. You say everything you want.”

“Just do your thing and embrace some girls. I don’t confront delinquents.”

“Keke. Delinquents, eh.”

He was seriously insulted, but Lee JunYeol only laughed. KangYoon didn’t see the value to confront him.

‘He’s crazy. It’ll become bad if I confront him anymore.’

KangYoon wanted to leave the place as he was worried that he would get caught up in something strange. There wouldn’t be anything good if he talked with the meticulously self-centered Sedy any more.

However, Lee JunYeol said something out of his expectations.

“Hyun. Let’s do a concert together.”

And he said something absurd to KangYoon.

“What?”

“Please make my comeback stage.”

KangYoon was dumbfounded. He didn’t know what he had just heard.

“What did you just say? Comeback?”

“Yeah. Comeback.”

KangYoon was dumbfounded. When he looked at Sedy’s face, it was full of playing around as he was smirking the whole time. KangYoon suppressed the fire in his heart once, and turned serious.

“I refuse. No, I respectfully decline. If you have a comeback right now, you will fail with 100% chance, so I don’t see the necessity to waste my energy on you.”

“Fail? Me?”

“Absolutely. Your voice changed so how can you not fail?”

Grab!!

Lee JunYeol violently grabbed KangYoon's collars. Actually, he was playing around when he said that. But he didn't know that KangYoon would poke him where it hurts so directly. He was an always-smiling Sedy, but his face turned fierce in an instant.

"You, you, you dare...!!"

"Do you think that the people won't notice? It's over with a star when the delusion breaks. Transformation? Transformation is when something changes to become better, and you think your voice changing is a transformation? That's not a transformation but a disfigure. Why don't I use a better word? It's mutation. It's not progress but a regress."

"Uuu..."

KangYoon said all those harsh words without blinking. However, Lee JunYeol couldn't argue against it. The hands that grabbed KangYoon's collars trembled. Sedy, who carefreely spoke until now was long gone.

"But even after that, you don't put in any effort, and you've immersed yourself in women and smoking. And you want me to make a stage for you? If it was the God of Music here, I don't know. Selling albums after a comeback in 3 weeks? Not possible."

"....."

In the end, Lee JunYeol let go of KangYoon's collars with trembling arms. However, all energy had long since left his body. Lee JunYeol, who acted carefreely, was long but gone.

"But if I have any advice for you, that is to quit smoking. Smoking is the worst thing for a singer."

KangYoon left Lee JunYeol. Lee JunYeol already seemed to have lost all his strength as he plopped down. It was his complete defeat.

'He won't come again, right?'

Arrogance drags a person into hell. Although he won't work with Sedy, he wished that Sedy would put an end to his arrogance. He purely wished for good singers to go well. Of course, the choice was his.

‘Lee KangYoon. Lee KangYoon.....!!’

Lee JunYeol glared at the lobby after KangYoon left while grinding his teeth. With a trembling body and bloodshot eyes...

“HanYu, let's see. You are not lacking anywhere.”

“Thank you.”

A personal interview that happened once a week. KangYoon was drinking a canned drink while talking with Seo HanYu who was drinking coffee. Of course, the drinks were without sugar.

Seo HanYu was nervous while looking at the graphs that evaluated her.

“I think you are looking at the fruits of your hard work. Singing, Dancing – you're not lacking anything. The trainers' evaluations are also good.”

“Thank you.”

“But this part is eye catching. She isn't very eye catching but does her role. What does this mean?”

“.....”

When KangYoon asked about the star quality, Seo HanYu became silent.

“HanYu. I want you to be a little more enthusiastic.”

“Enthusiastic?”

“I'll explain it in simpler terms. First, let's put singing training and dancing training to the minimum and do other things. I will set a schedule with training outside as the basis.”

When she heard the word ‘outside’, she stiffened. She didn't like

the outside that well. However, KangYoon didn't bother about it and kept writing. In the end, a special schedule outside was created especially for Seo HanYu.

After creating the schedule, KangYoon asked.

“Are you doing well with the unnis?”

“Yes. I'm doing well.”

“You shared a room with Christie, right? Do you think you can get along?”

“...If you exclude the fact that she snores at night, then yes.”

KangYoon almost burst out laughing but he suppressed it. Being too honest was also a problem in itself. To think she snores with that face of hers... KangYoon thought that he should bury it somewhere in his heart.

KangYoon sent Seo HanYu away and he approved some of the budget reports. These were to be taken to the President's office.

‘It's going well. But there's less used budget than I thought for this month. I think I can use it somewhere else.’

And when he finished writing the report, it became night. KangYoon stretched his arms and hurried home.

But then...

“Hyung!!”

When he went to the lobby, there was a voice which called him intimately.

“Sedy?”

“I came here to see you. Hi?”

It was Lee JunYeol who even grabbed his collar. However, such a figure was gone. It was as if he had bipolar disorder as his expression was full of smiles.

“What is it again?”

“Hey, we’re done being polite with each other right?”

“.....”

KangYoon had a headache. To think he came back after all that insult... While KangYoon was grabbing his head to think of a solution to send him away, Lee JunYeol spoke.

“I thought about it a lot yesterday. Yes, your words are all correct. My voice changed and I didn’t put in effort. Smoke? I smoked like crazy to forget all that. People say that you should control evil with evil so I even believed in absurd thing like smoke can make me better. But the result is this.”

“.....”

KangYoon narrowed his eyes. He didn’t understand what Lee JunYeol was saying right now. Is he confessing his sins or something? However he calmly listened.

“In the end, I started doing things as I wanted. My throat was becoming worse but I had loads of money. Playing around was fun. Women? I played around to the point of being fed up. Meeting women was so easy when I had the money. Rubbing and rolling around – I did everything I wanted to do at that time. But you now? The more I played around, I thought strange things. I’m a singer, a singer. I’m supposed to be singing but what is this? – things like this. And so I even recorded things.”

“What is it that you want to say?”

“I did record things, but the stages were all not to my liking. No, to say it correctly, I was afraid now that I was going to sing. My changed voice, wouldn’t people say something about it? Will it be alright? My heart was pounding. I was scared. My entire body trembled in fear.”

“.....”

“However, a man should have face. How can I say this? And so I rejected all of them. I won’t do it. And I met you.”

“Then don’t do it. I’m not a catholic priest who listens to confessions.”

KangYoon felt like he was talking with a drunk man. He asked himself and he answered himself. He got excited by himself – Lee JunYeol was like that. KangYoon felt that he didn’t need to listen anymore and turned back.

But Lee JunYeol desperately clung to him.

“Hyun. I was wrong. Please make my stage.”

“.....”

KangYoon doubted his ears. He blinked his eyes while thinking what he had just heard.

“Nobody said things like that to me. In fact, I also thought that I was probably a little worse than before but I never thought that I would fail. I just vaguely thought that this was wrong. However, you said the entire truth to me. I was angry at first, but when I thought about it, your words were all correct.”

“.....”

“I’m scared to stand in front of my fans with this voice. However, if it’s you, if it’s you who told me about myself clearly and looked into me, helped, I think it’ll be possible. Help. I beg you.”

Lee JunYeol kneeled towards KangYoon who had his back towards him. He was serious. KangYoon was surprised at Lee JunYeol being so serious, but he didn’t show it on the surface. KangYoon calmly spoke.

“I already said yesterday. I want to invest my time and effort in something that has no possibility. And this industry is not as easy as you think it is, you won’t succeed just because you’ve changed your mind, you should know this, right?”

“Hyuuung...”

“Perhaps the God of Music could do it, but it will be difficult for

me. If you truly changed, then you will be able to do well even by working with other people.”

KangYoon tapped Lee JunYeol’s shoulders and left for home. With the kneeling Lee JunYeol behind him. He did feel bad but KangYoon did his best to ignore it.

“Oh my god...”

“I, isn’t that Sedy?”

“Whoa, what is up with that?”

The next day.

As soon as the employees of MG Entertainment came to work, they saw an amazing scene. It was a scene where Sedy was kneeling in the lobby. He wasn’t taken away since he wasn’t in the way of the entrance, but everyone whispered to each other.

Chairman Won JinMoon and President Lee HyunJi also found this absurd after they got off the black sedan.

“Interesting things sure keep happening nowadays, miss HyunJi.”

“Indeed.”

They ordered their secretaries to look into it and went to their respective offices. It was all chaotic after that too. All the trainees and employees talked about Lee JunYeol. Predictions and rumors that he was proposing or he was the hidden illegitimate son of the chairman swept across MG Entertainment.

“Lee JunYeol...”

“Hyung, you came?”

And finally, the source of the problem had arrived.

KangYoon sighed when he looked at Lee JunYeol who greeted him in the same clothes as yesterday.

“Sedy...”

Morning rush hour. There were many people inside the lobby. In the middle, Lee JunYeol was kneeling in front of him. People's gazes focused on him and people started whispering to each other. KangYoon was the current hot icon of the company. Lee JunYeol was once a well-going singer. One was kneeling while one was receiving, so it was of course a chaos.

"Did you really spend the night here?"

"Yes. I waited for you."

"Ha..."

KangYoon thought it was absurd. Due to the characteristics of an entertainment company, there were a lot of cases where people had to work overnight so it was indeed open 24 hours a day. Of course, security was meticulous. KangYoon grabbed a guard who stayed overnight and asked. When he heard that it was indeed true, he could only be dumbfounded.

"But why?"

"I said it, didn't I? Help me."

"I think you heard what I said yesterday. Don't do useless things like this and return."

Although he was surprised that Sedy stayed the whole night, KangYoon was cool-headed. Even while looking at KangYoon scanning the ID card to enter and going in the elevator, Sedy shouted loudly.

"I'll wait for you!!"

KangYoon thought it was absurd as he sighed. This kind of recklessness was a first for him. But he did slightly pity him.

There was a slightly absurd trouble, but KangYoon's day was ordinary. He approved and he got things approved, and he held meetings, and there was nothing special.

The problem occurred at night.

“Haa...”

He finished early so he was about to go home when he saw Lee JunYeol still kneeling in the lobby. The people whispered to each other as they passed by, and the lobby staff seemed to have given him something to eat, as Kimbab and bread was placed in front of him.

“Haha...”

When he looked at Lee JunYeol waving at him, only a dry laugh came out of his mouth. Actually, he thought about Lee JunYeol a lot since the night before, but he couldn't decide on a direction due to the risk and the profit. He thought that he wouldn't be here today, but he was here today.

“You're here?”

“You are amazing, I give you that...”

“Didn't I say? That it won't do without you.”

“I should have refused. Even if you're like this, it won't work.”

“Then what should I do for you to do it? Am I really hopeless? Because my voice changed? Will the people really not accept me like this? I'm over just like that?”

“.....”

“Whether it was the people at my company or the people I worked with, they all said this : You're Sedy, your singing will work – like this. However, you're saying different things. And so, I'm worried. And I think that if you say I can do it, I can really do it. I think that if you say I can do it, I can definitely do it.”

“...I should tell you why you really can't do it.”

KangYoon plopped down to sit in front of Lee JunYeol. He felt the curious gazes of the people around him, but KangYoon didn't bother with it.

“Your voice is a big element of worry. However, you didn't try to

overcome that element of worry or use it. You escaped it all and fell into abyss. Smoking, alcohol, women. It's good to enjoy these moderately but you couldn't control yourself. I can't work with such..."

"I will stop them all."

"What?"

"I will stop them all. Smoking, alcohol, women and everything. I will just do as you say."

Resolution could be seen inside Lee JunYeol's eyes. And KangYoon also felt it. However, he was worried. Just saying it was easy.

'In the end, Sedy didn't do well. Is there a reason I should do this despite all that?'

There was no reason to take risks. Work will keep coming his way anyway. Moreover, he had already reported to President Lee HyunJi that he won't do it. However, he did change JooAh's change for the better, and he was changing the trainees' future as well. Even if it's Sedy, wouldn't that be true? Wasn't there a value worth challenging?"

Due to KangYoon, the album which should be settled around 10th place on the Oricon Chart topped it and was sweeping money from Japan. Even if it wasn't to this point, couldn't he change the future?

KangYoon who pondered for a long time, spoke with lights in his eyes.

"First. Let me hear your voice before I decide."

"Really? Then..."

"Voice first. Let's go."

Lee JunYeol rejoiced like a little kid. KangYoon meant that he would consider it even if it was just a little. KangYoon told him to

stand up, and Lee JunYeol tried to stand up. But as he was kneeling for such a long time, he couldn't straighten his legs easily. In the end, KangYoon had to help him up.

"Where did your manager go?"

"Vacation. I can't show him such an uncool side of me, right?"

"...You're something, alright?"

While looking at Lee JunYeol who was going to the underground floor with the help from KangYoon, people who were leaving work whispered to themselves. While going through those whispers, KangYoon and Lee JunYeol headed towards the underground studio.

"Wow, to think I'm entering the studio of the renowned MG."

"Is this place that famous?"

"Of course. This is one of the big 3 studios. It's renowned for its sound quality being good."

"The conditions are good. But are your legs alright?"

"I'm alright. I can do it sitting."

Lee JunYeol sat down after limping. KangYoon turned on the machine and sat in front of the mixer and configured the settings. He matched the settings to match his voice. Lee JunYeol's music wasn't there so he had to go with a recording of a famous song.

Just a little faster — Just a little —

A thick and pleasant voice rang throughout the studio. It was the low voice that the fans liked. However the problem came after that.

But — my love — is still —

The higher the pitch became, a strange change happened. Sedy was someone who exploded out at a high pitch after grabbing their hearts with a low voice at the beginning, but power was clearly

insufficient in the high parts. Of course, it wasn't a big change. One had to be conscious about it to notice it.

‘It’s getting weaker.’

The Sedy reflected in KangYoon’s eyes was shining brightly with white light at the beginning. However, as the song progressed, the white light became fainter and at the end, its density became a lot lower.

After the song ended, Lee JunYeol carefully spoke to the microphone inside the studio.

-How was it?

KangYoon thought for a bit.

“It isn’t as good as in the past.”

-As expected, is that so.

“You worked hard.”

Lee JunYeol, who heard a not so good evaluation came out nervously. KangYoon sat in front of him.

“I’m not as good as I was in the past, it seems. Is it really difficult? Ah, I’m craving for a smoke.”

Lee JunYeol took out a cigar from his pocket as he always did but he put it back in the end. Habit was a frightening thing. KangYoon clicked his tongue as if it was absurd.

“You said you’ll quit.”

“Sorry, forgive me for just this time. Really.. Bad, bad hand, bad hand!!”

“...Okay. Let’s pack up.”

“Then we’re really doing a concert together?”

KangYoon kept pushing Lee JunYeol away, but the thought that it wouldn’t do without KangYoon pervaded Lee JunYeol’s mind. He thought that, if it was him, he could do other things for him

other than just setting him on the right path.

“A big risk always bring together a big profit.”

KangYoon thought about it. If the reactions of Sedy's comeback stage was good, then he will be able to receive better work after it. Although albums were a bit of a stretch, KangYoon decided that he would do something if it was just the concert.

“I'll think about it more for the next few days. First, keep what you said last time.”

“Yes.”

This referred to smoking, women and other things like these. Lee JunYeol nodded his head like a little kid. KangYoon emphasized again as if it was still worrying.

“Words are easy. Especially smoking. Quit it unconditionally. If you smoke even once while preparing for the stage, then the project is over.”

“Okay, okay.”

“I will put this in the contract.”

“Huh?! Then...”

“Didn't I say I will think about it for the next few days? Quit smoking by next week. Let's talk then. Now return. I'm scared that people will spread rumors about me if you keep kneeling like that in the lobby.”

“Thank you, thank you.”

Lee JunYeol finally smiled brightly and hugged KangYoon. However, it was a man's, KangYoon hated it.

“Let go!!”

“Hahaha!! Thank you, thank you.”

“Go away.”

KangYoon was a man who preferred the soft embrace of a woman

rather than a hard embrace of a man.

Until 2nd year, HeeYoon's school life wasn't that enjoyable.

Thinking that she had to at least graduate high school, she dragged her weak body to school while receiving dialysis, but due to her weak body, it was difficult for her to hang out with her friends. Moreover, poverty made the other kids around her age not approach her, as they were at the ages where they liked to make themselves up. HeeYoon was always alone.

However, starting from her 3rd year, her school life became different. Her clothes were obvious and starting from the time that rumors that she was friends with JooAh spread around the school, evaluation about her became completely different.

“Huh? It's solved like this?”

“Yeah. If you look here, the limit value is...”

HeeYoon now had friend that she could ask questions that she didn't understand to. Thanks to that, her school life became very enjoyable. The past that she didn't want to talk about to KangYoon as she didn't want to make him worry was gone.

“Thanks.”

“No, HeeYoon, I...”

“What is it? Do you have anything to say?”

The class leader who taught her a math question stuttered. The class leader seemed to have something difficult to say as she kept touching her glasses before speaking with difficulty.

“Y... you know, JooAh's signature... Can I get one?”

“JooAh's signature? Didn't you receive one last time?”

“The line was too long...”

Even the rich would become fans if they saw a singer once. The bookworm class leader who said she had no interest in singers was

the same. HeeYoon said okay and accepted it. The class leader said thanks and even copied the notes she took for HeeYoon.

When half of the afternoon classes were over, HeeYoon left early. It was to receive dialysis. She left school with her bag like normal, but a familiar person was waiting there.

“Oppa!!”

“Hello.”

KangYoon leaned on the school gates and greeted her.

“Oppa, aren’t you supposed to be working right now?”

“Today’s an early leave. You gotta go to hospital.”

“I said I can go alone.

As her brother was always busy, it felt bad for her to take his time away. However, she was also thankful that such a busy person was spending time with her. HeeYoon knew very well that KangYoon treated her as the number one.

After starting dialysis after arriving at the hospital, KangYoon sat in front of HeeYoon and they talked about a lot of things. It was mostly about the trainees. HeeYoon enjoyed the story about her peers that KangYoon talked about.

“Pfft. So that MinAh girl keeps calling you ahjussi?”

“That’s what I’m saying. I keep telling her not to, but I don’t know why but she keeps doing that.”

“It’s probably because she likes you.”

“No way. Do you call a man you like ‘ahjussi’, HeeYoon?”

“Uum... No, but I’m probably right. That MinAh girl, is probably doing that since she likes you, oppa.”

“No way, not possible. Then should I call a girl I like ‘[ahjumma](#)’? HeeYoon-ahjumma?”

(T/N: ahjumma is female equivalent of ahjussi)

“Say that again and you will receive a beating!”

The conversation inside the hospital was enjoyable, but it wasn't long. The exhaustion due to dialysis made HeeYoon fall asleep and KangYoon headed to the doctor to see the current progress.

The doctor said that there were no big problems. KangYoon, who heard that nothing was different from normal, headed to the hospital entrance. It was because he craved for a smoke.

“Phew...”

KangYoon was refreshingly exhaling smoke when a familiar shadow could be seen distantly. It was a school uniform that wasn't fancy, but it was a middle school girl with an eye catching tall height.

‘Seo HanYu?’

To think that Seo HanYu was at the hospital when she should be at practice... KangYoon was confused. However, it was more laughable to tail her. He decided to ask her in the next personal interview.

After he finished smoking and waited for the smell of smoke to go away, KangYoon headed to the ward.

‘She's still sleeping, eh.’

HeeYoon, who was still under dialysis was sleeping without a care in the world. KangYoon gently stroked her hair.

“HeeYoon. This time, I will definitely let you live for a long. Long time. I'll let you marry, have kids, and live a happy life. Definitely, definitely. You don't have to worry about anything and just keep living on. Okay?”

KangYoon's greatest wish. That was for her sister to live a healthy life like ordinary people and marry and live happily. His motivation to hold out despite failing every singer he put his hands on in his previous life, was HeeYoon.

While looking at HeeYoon's calm face which was gently shined on by the sunlight, KangYoon smiled peacefully.

Chapter 23: A Plan That Overcomes Blanks

(3)

Evening.

It was the time when people scanned their ID cards to leave for home. KangYoon also joined the queue. Of course, he had a different objective.

‘I shouldn’t think of leaving early today either.’

Everyone was leaving work, but only KangYoon was leaving to eat. It was due to the fact that his work piled up massively due to the work with Sedy. Moreover, he also had to work on the girl group project from time to time, so he had a lot of work. In the end, today’s overtime work was set in stone.

KangYoon was powerlessly leaving the lobby when someone grabbed his hand. He turned back to see it was Jung MinAh.

“Ahjussi!!”

“Oh, it’s MinAh.”

“No way. I was trying to surprise you.”

She wanted to see KangYoon jump in shock, but it didn’t turn out as she expected so Jung MinAh seemed disappointed. However, she still lively came to KangYoon’s side.

“Are you leaving?”

“No, I’m going to grab something to eat. Are you also?”

“No, I already ate dinner, and I came out to drink some coffee.”

“Is that so. Work hard.”

KangYoon was about to turn back when the strength grabbing his arms became stronger.

“Hey, we’ve met so it’s disappointing if you go like that.”

“I heard you were going to get coffee.”

“Treat me!!”

Jung MinAh requested with liveliness. KangYoon smiled. The only trainee who treated him like that within the company was her. Of course, there was one singer... but this kind of no restraint attitude was cute in his eyes.

“What do you want to eat?”

“Yay!! Frappuccino!!”

“What the heck is that?”

KangYoon tilted his head in confusion at the name he heard for the first time, but Jung MinAh dragged him to the coffee shop which was next to the company building. It was famous amongst the trainees as a shop with tasty coffee.

“Welcome. You came today with one of the company people, eh?”

“Good evening, owner,”

Jung MinAh seemed to be a regular as she talked freely with the owner. They talked about what was happening in the company and what happened with her for the last few days. KangYoon quietly watched her figure.

“What do you want to drink, ahjussi?”

“Me? The same one as you.”

KangYoon ordered the same thing and sat down. The coffee came soon and when KangYoon was about to stand up to get it, Jung MinAh stood up first.

“No. I should be the one doing this.”

“It’s alright, sit.”

“Oho?”

KangYoon went ahead of her and brought the coffee. After that,

he even set the cup holder and a straw and held it out to Jung MinAh.

“Thank you.”

“This is nothing. But this has fresh cream on it, huh?”

“Yes. It’s very delicious.”

“I see, you gotta exercise like crazy, huh?”

“Eek...”

Jung MinAh was doing well until she was given a scolding because of the fresh cream on the coffee.

Of course, it wasn’t long...

Jung MinAh, who didn’t lose her liveliness at KangYoon’s scolding, started talking to KangYoon in delight.

From talks about training to school life, she talked about everything without hesitation.

Just that there was nothing about Lee SamSoon.

It was a private place so KangYoon also didn’t talk about practice or evaluation or the sort.

He just silently listened to her story like an older brother.

Jung MinAh who talked for a long time, seemed to hesitate, but in the end, asked something.

“How many brothers and sisters do you have?”

“I have one little sister.”

“Little sister? If she looks like you, then she would be skinny, right?”

KangYoon had long legs. HeeYoon also had a great ratio. Although, she was too thin...

“My sister? She’s pretty, alright. How about... Ah.”

KangYoon stopped as he was about to say something.

Jung MinAh was an orphan without parents or siblings.

However, Jung MinAh gestured that it was alright at KangYoon who was embarrassed.

“It’s alright. Well. That happens sometimes. Anyway, how old is your sister?”

“She’s 2 years older than you. And perhaps because of that, we don’t fight.”

“If you two are that far apart then... You shouldn’t fight. You’re an uncle rather than a brother.”

“Hey.”

Did she poke his weakness?

KangYoon and Jung MinAh started getting friendly.

Jung MinAh said with a slightly envious tone.

“I’m envious of your sister. Well... I have lots of friends too.”

“Who?”

The two’s talk blossomed as the conversation went on.

The two kept finding common topics.

KangYoon laughed it over when he saw Jung MinAh spotting details to continue the talk.

While thinking ‘girls at that age must be like that’...

“It’s time to practice. You should go.”

“Yes. I will take my leave first.”

When it was time, KangYoon stood up and took away the empty cups. Jung MinAh tried to do it herself, but she muttered while looking at KangYoon who took it first and was heading to the bin.

“That’s what you call a cool man. Of course...”

Jung MinAh strangely couldn’t forget KangYoon’s back figure as he was putting away the cups.

The studio Duka Entertainment rented was a small one. At that place, Lee JunYeol was in the middle of practicing emotionally with a microphone in his hand.

I was like that from the beginning – – What should I do – – What should I – – Outside the studio, KangYoon and the people from Duka Entertainment was listening to his voice.

“Ha, I never knew I would get to see JunYeol practicing so hard. Team Leader. You’re amazing.”

President Kim TaeHoon of Duka Entertainment smiled. It wasn’t a neat smile but it was sufficient to express his satisfied emotion.

“I also don’t know how long it has been since JunYeol-hyung practiced. I always looked around arcades or motels to find him...”

While remembering the past 2 years of suffering, Manager Yu SeungCheol felt deeply touched. As he thought that he didn’t have to have a hard time looking for Sedy, he thought it was a dream.

However, unlike the touched people, KangYoon’s eyes were sharp. Strictly speaking, his eyes were directed to the light exuded by Lee JunYeol.

‘It’s too faint.’

It was bright at first but as the pitch became higher, it became fainter. KangYoon was agonized about what to do with this part.

At KangYoon’s advice, Lee JunYeol was resumed going to the hospital, but as expected, he only heard that it wouldn’t be easy to return to his former state ‘It won’t be easy. He quit smoking, so I have no choice but to do this now.’

Lee JunYeol kept his promise of quitting smoking. Moreover, he even quit women he liked so much. And while saying it was a proof of his resolve, he also cut his long hair short after he grew it for such a long time. At Lee JunYeol, who was as if he would listen to all of KangYoon’s orders, KangYoon had to submit.

“Thanks for your work. Oh, hyung!!”

When Lee JunYeol saw KangYoon he came running and hugged him. KangYoon felt uncomfortable at first, but when he knew that Lee JunYeol was originally like this, he let it go.

“Hyung, what’s up? Whatchamacallit, uh.. stage... scratch? Weren’t you busy doing that?”

“It’s sketch. And I’m not the one doing that but the stage production team is the one doing it.”

“Oh, well. I thought you were doing it. I’m kinda disappointed?”

“...Enough of that. How’s your condition? Are you alright?”

“You’ve heard me. I don’t like it.”

Lee JunYeol seemed to not like it as he shook his head. However, he had to adapt to the already changed voice. Or to develop that voice.

“I have something I want to hear, and something I want to say – that’s why I’m here.”

“Oh, really> SeungCheol, get us something to drink.”

Lee JunYeol directed KangYoon towards a sofa on one side, Soon, Manager Yu SeungCheol gave them simple drinks. It was orange juice in a plastic bottle and paper cups. When he saw that, Lee JunYeol sighed.

“Please understand. We’re all men here so we don’t have anything to give you.”

“Well, there’s nothing wrong with this. First, I’ve received the set list.”

“Already? That was quick. When are we?”

“Last.”

Lee JunYeol became interested when he heard that the order of sequence for the open broadcast. However, when he heard that

they were last, his eyes widened.

“L...last?”

“Yeah, why? Didn’t you like being eye-catching?”

“You can set a comeback stage as last?”

“That’s my job. To do the fancy and beautiful stage you want to do, then the last is the only choice. If we want to shoot airshots and spray liquid nitrogen, then last is the best.”

“Hyung...”

Last in sequence was usually given to well-known singers. To think that he, who went on hiatus for 2 years, was last... Lee JunYeol was touched and hugged KangYoon again.

“Let go, Let go of me. Ah, really. I don’t like men.”

“Auu,, auu, my dear hyung. I wanna smooch you. C’mere.”

“Go away.”

KangYoon was frightened. However, Lee JunYeol, who enjoyed his reaction, clung to him more. KangYoon barely shook him off and continued speaking.

“Now the stage is set as you want. However, there is a problem.”

“Whether my singing gets through or not.”

“Yes. And so...”

KangYoon was careful. It was because what he was about to speak right now may touch a singer’s pride. However, he hesitated for a brief moment before saying with confidence.

“The song that matches your voice – let’s pick it again from the album.”

At KangYoon’s words, not only Lee JunYeol, but the people who were only listening, like President Kim TaeHoon, and Manager Yu SeungCheol, all froze.

Practice room where 5 girls were focused in practicing. The door slowly opened, and Seo HanYu came in.

“Seo HanYu, aren’t you late?”

“I’m sorry...”

The trainer was looking over Christie An’s posture before finding Seo HanYu reflected on the mirror and said with a high voice.

“It’s the 3rd day already. Did some screws get loose because you were already selected for the singer team?”

“I’m sorry...”

Seo HanYu lowered her head like a sinner. She was 30 minutes later. There was no room for excuses.

“Being on time is the basics of the basics. You weren’t late even once until a while ago. Is there some kind of reason?”

“.....”

The trainer asked but Seo HanYu didn’t answer. She was asked multiple times but the trainer, who saw that Seo HanYu couldn’t answer, didn’t ask anymore and just checked as late.

“Talk to the team leader later.”

“Yes...”

“Ok, HanYu came so let’s practice once together.”

When Seo HanYu came into position, the main team work practice started.

“HanYu, what is wrong? Did something happen?”

“It’s nothing, unni.”

“You look really tired.”

Han JooYeon asked Seo HanYu, who looked exhausted, with worry, but she didn’t answer clearly.

The 6 girls’ practice continued.

KangYoon's words of changing the title song could be considered interfering with Duka Entertainment's work. However, Lee JunYeol had no hesitation.

“Sure.”

“JunYeol.”

As if he would believe even if KangYoon said that the sun rose from the west, he had no hesitation. It was instead President Kim TaeHoon who tried to stop him “Title song's aren't to be changed easily. We have to change a lot of things including the concept and the album cover photo if we have to change the title song. We also did a music video already. If we want to take one again, it costs a lot of money.”

“He says it doesn't fit my voice. It's better to go with one that does. Clinging onto something that will fail is the same as touching a dead person's balls.” (T/N: !?!?!?) “JunYeol, where did you learn that. How could I stop you... Do what you want.”

Lee JunYeol couldn't be stopped once he was on something. As always, President Kim TaeHoon lost to him. It was the sadness of being the president of a small company.

“Hyung, what song is better?”

“That should be decided by you.”

“Can't you do it?”

“Me? That's intruding authority. If I...”

“It's alright, it's alright. It should be better than now.”

How did he change so drastically... KangYoon couldn't understand the race known as 'singers'. But as he was the one to offer it, he thought that he had to take responsibility and pick the song himself. When KangYoon gave his approval, Lee JunYeol jumped in delight and he was about to play the album right away. However, KangYoon shook his head.

“Sing it yourself.”

“Eh? Weren’t you going to choose after listening to it?”

“Live is better, right?”

“It is... but you want to listen to all 9?”

“Sing them once. Think of it as practice.”

Lee JunYeol went inside the booth and prepared to sing. The setting was already done so there was nothing else to do. Matching KangYoon’s signal, the song started.

‘Not this.’

The first song, ‘Light in You’. Befitting of being the first song, the impactful high pitch was pleasant to listen to but KangYoon shook his head. The light coming out from Lee JunYeol was weak, and the changed voice came out clearly on the high parts. After that, the next song flowed out and KangYoon paid attention to the light.

‘This is no good either. The color is too...’

It wasn’t grey. But the white wasn’t clear. Like the custom color panel on the graphic program *****shop, he had to differentiate many different colors of white and their intensity so he had to put all his mind to it. And as he also had to listen to the music, he had to focus on his ears too. There were many things to pay attention to.

First, second, third, fourth.

They were all not to his liking.

-Hyung, how is it?

“This is also no good, what do you think?”

-Me too. I think the second one was better.

Lee JunYeol drank a lot of water as he was tired from singing all those. It was reasonable.

“Should we continue some other time?”

-No, if we're doing this now, then we should finish it. I'm alright.

"And your throat?"

-Don't treat me like a patient. I'm alright.

Lee JunYeol stood in front of the microphone again. He was tired and exhausted, but his eyes were shining. KangYoon saw that and played the next song.

Memories – – – are better than partings – – –

It was the ringing bass tone again. It was no different from normal. However, the change started from the middle where the tone became higher.

While looking at the faint you — I – –

'This is it!!'

The faint light until now was not there. From Lee JunYeol, blinding white light came out and filled the studio. The voice piercing the ears also harmonized with the pitch and the melody and enhanced the song.

KangYoon gripped his fists. He had the feeling. The thought that he definitely have to do this song pervaded his mind.

Chapter 24: A Plan That Overcomes Blanks

(4)

When KangYoon signaled Lee JunYeol to end it, Lee JunYeol came out of the booth while wiping his sweaty forehead.

It seemed as he was tired after singing so many as his shoulders were drooping a lot.

“Hyung? Is it alright to not do anymore?”

“How about we go with this?”

“This? You mean that this is the best, right?”

“In my opinion, yes. Although, you’re the one who’ll decide...”

He talked like that but in fact, there was no way that Lee JunYeol, who basically became KangYoon’s follower, would go against KangYoon’s words.

President Kim TaeHoon and Manager Yu SeungCheol were just there for show.

“Good. I put this towards the back since it was easy to sing. It’s good for me.”

“.....”

It was to the point that President Kim TaeHoon, who was standing behind KangYoon, seemed pitiful. If a star became too powerful, then this became frequent. When KangYoon saw President Kim TaeHoon, who looked like he wanted to say something, but couldn’t due to Lee JunYeol being so happy, KangYoon pitied him.

Now that they changed songs, they had to go over the concert again. Stages changed according to the characteristics of the song, so there would be a lot to change. Of course, the order of sequence that KangYoon received wouldn’t change, but there would be a lot

of changes in the stage production. Thanks to that, KangYoon became busier.

“Then, practice hard.”

KangYoon called for a meeting with the Production Team via phone and stood up. He didn't have a lot of time, so as he felt that he would get busy, he felt hurried.

“Hyung. Thanks. I will do my best.”

“Work hard.”

KangYoon left Duka Entertainment and headed to his office. He had to process the work he couldn't do while he was held up with Lee JunYeol.

As soon as he arrived at the company, KangYoon headed towards the meeting room. When he arrived, the Production Team was already waiting with the materials prepared.

“Good day to you, Team Leader.”

“Good day to you. Shall we begin?”

KangYoon first told the Production Team of the changes in the song. Then, all of them repeatedly listened to the changed song until they were used to it. Lee JunYeol made KangYoon in charge of all the stage related things, and thanks to that, the Production Team had to know the song well. When one was in charge in a lot of things, a lot of responsibility would follow.

“The finale would be important.”

Staff Lee JaeJin, who was good with special effects, spoke. He thought up of the timing to put in special effects as he spoke.

“How about we do an confetti cannon after the second chorus ends and the key changes?”

At the word ‘confetti cannon’, vice-chief Kim ChanSoo retorted.

“It's a place with a lot of wind. If we do an confetti cannon, then

too many confettis may fly towards the audience. How about an inflatable tube arch?”

“But if we’re aiming for a concentrated effect, the confetti cannon is...”

The two’s discussion about the special effect became long. KangYoon was listening for a short while before interfering.

“L-World concert stage is indoors but it’s a wide area. Considering the space, an inflatable tube arch would be better aesthetically. But the noise is the problem. Let’s go with confetti cannon.”

KangYoon’s role was organizing. The team members would freely talk about their own opinions and when the stage director does the 1st organization, KangYoon did the final approval. There weren’t any cases where people suppressed each other by saying that each other was wrong nor were there cases where people tried to teach the other. The meeting that KangYoon wanted was also this kind of meeting.

The production meeting continued for a long time. It was a short 5 minute performance, but an enormous amount of preparation was needed. At the scene, and at the office – KangYoon needed a vision that can take both of these into account. To have this vision, the 10 years of failing in his ‘past life’ and the 7 years as a manager played an important role.

When his daily schedule was over, the moon was already high up in the skies.

‘HanYu is always late these days.’

While clearing up his office, he looked at the trainer’s report and there were something which caught his eyes. It was the part where it was written about Seo HanYu being late for 3 continuous days. Being late or absences were strict as even trainees may have to leave the company due to those. And this was about 3 continuous

days.

‘Let’s ask tomorrow.’

The trainees would all have finished before this time anyway. KangYoon checked Seo HanYu’s documents before leaving the office.

As he was about to go down the elevator, the elevator stopped at the 3rd floor. KangYoon was about to press the close button quickly when he saw that a practice room had lights on. It was the practice room that the project team was assigned to.

‘Is there someone?’

It was already very late. Although the the dorms weren’t far, to think that someone was still practicing. KangYoon slightly smiled smugly. He quietly approached the practice room and peeked inside through a small window.

‘Seo HanYu?’

However, it was Seo HanYu, who was late for 3 days, who was was there. She repeated the song practice today again, and again.

When KangYoon saw this, he became confused.

‘Is she doing extra practice since she couldn’t catch up with the rest due to being late?’

As he knew her, Seo HanYu was from the effort faction. She was an honors student who would quietly practice until she became able to do if she considered that she didn’t do well. However, she lacked the charm to appeal to the people so there were talks about other trainees becoming jealous of her.

KangYoon quietly went inside.

“Ah...!”

Seo HanYu stiffened when she looked at KangYoon who popped out from nowhere.

“T... Team Leader.”

“Why are you so surprised?”

“No, it’s nothing. Good evening.”

“Are you doing personal training?”

“Oh...Oh, yes. I...I think I...I have insufficient practice.”

Seo HanYu was a shy girl. When she stood in front of KangYoon, she couldn’t speak well. There was the thought that KangYoon was the highest person who was in charge of her so that nervousness became even bigger.

“Why are you trembling so much?”

“N, no. What trembling.”

“I’m not here to scold you or anything. Practice is a good thing. Just don’t overdo it. But HanYu.”

“Yes, Team Leader.”

“You were late a lot these days. Did something happen?”

“.....”

Seo HanYu became silent. No, she opened her mouth but she didn’t say anything. It was clear that she was hesitating whether to speak about it or not. KangYoon realized that and he shook his head.

“Tell me if something’s up. Don’t keep being late. Okay?”

“Yes... I’m sorry.”

“We’re in the same team already. We’re going together until the end. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

KangYoon noticed that there was definitely something up with Seo HanYu. Hospital, late, and even extra practice. He didn’t know exactly but he definitely knew that something bad was happening

with her. Her actions were too different from her actions normally.

However, rather than forcing her to talk, KangYoon decided to wait.

“Take a taxi.”

“Team Leader, it’s alright. This...”

“Then I’ll get going.”

KangYoon handed her more money than the taxi fee needed to go to the dorms. With words that even though the dorms weren’t far, it wasn’t good for a girl to walk alone at night.

“Thank you.”

When KangYoon left, Seo HanYu didn’t feel real. It was a good intention that she didn’t expect. Moreover, she thought KangYoon as a scary person that evaluated her, so she didn’t even imagine that KangYoon would show her such affection. Seo HanYu briefly stared dumbfoundedly at the door that KangYoon left via.

“As expected!! This is what I wanted!!”

Lee JunYeol was delighted at the technical rider (refers to a document with details about the stage preparation) that KangYoon brought.

“Wow, what’s an electronic violin? Lee Se’Eun? I heard this person was hard to scout.”

“I put some effort. Don’t hit on her, okay?”

“I’m not the me from the past, sir saint.”

Lee JunYeol was delighted like a little child while looking at the documents that KangYoon brought. To think it was an open radio broadcast where he would have his comeback stage, it was too grand. There was no need to speak about the devices and there was even a special orchestra. Moreover, he could estimate how much

effort KangYoon put in as this was done with a small amount of budge.

“...Hyung. You aren’t going to request more money, right?”

“I’m not that shameless. It’s also my first work so I need to do well.”

“That’s true. If I do well, then everybody becomes happy.”

Lee JunYeol was simple minded. KangYoon didn’t know whether to label him as pure or shat. But it was a character that he couldn’t hate.

“Then are we doing a rehearsal right now?”

“You’re right. We will be going through it for the final time when we’re at that place so practice hard.”

“Don’t worry. Who do you think I am?”

“It’s because I know who you are that I’m worried.”

“Ayy, I said just believe in me. I’m Sedy, you know?”

KangYoon left the Lee JunYeol with brimming confidence and left Duka Entertainment. When he thought that there wouldn’t be an occasion he would go to that shabby 2nd floor again in the future, he felt both refreshed and disappointed.

‘Now, it’s for the real stage.’

KangYoon resolved himself as everything would be decided on the day itself.

A few days later.

L-World Outdoor Concert Stage.

A special stage for the radio open broadcast was installed and a technical rehearsal was underway, According to the set lights, the engineers checked the sounds and they checked the various stage devices and were preparing for the open broadcast.

“Wow. I’m nervous, alright.”

At that time, Lee JunYeol was inside the tent made as temporary waiting room. While making a record of arriving 3 hours earlier on the scene, which was unthinkable for the past him, Lee JunYeol had a look at the technical rehearsal, greeted the staff and just looked around the stage leisurely.

“Hyung. Are you really JunYeol-Hyung?”

“What? You.”

There was an accident where Manager Yu SeungCheol was too touched and pinched Lee JunYeol’s cheeks before getting beaten up, but Lee JunYeol had changed a lot. As he, a well-known delinquent, changed like this, the people seemed not used to this as they all had confused reactions.

“Look at everyone being surprised at my transformation. Right?”

“.....”

Manager Yu SeungCheol raised both of his hands in defeat at Lee JunYeol who was enjoying this.

When the technical rehearsal ended, the pre-rehearsal to check the line of sight, began. The signers who arrived checked the microphones to see if it matched their voices, checked their line of sight, and had time to adapt to the stage.

“Hyung!!”

Now it was Lee JunYeol’s turn. He found KangYoon while testing the microphone and waved his hand vigorously. At this mindless action, KangYoon grabbed his head.

“...Check the sounds first.”

“Yes, sir!”

Lee JunYeol, who answered every one of KangYoon’s questions, became a topic amongst the staff. Words about who he was for Sedy listen to him like that became a rumor and spread around like

a wildfire. Fortunately, or perhaps, unfortunately, there was no one who connected KangYoon to JooAh.

What were left were the camera rehearsal and the run-through rehearsal. Although it was a radio, an open broadcast was accompanied by cameras. The camera moved along the line and they checked if there were any errors, and the starting time was nearing.

At that time, KangYoon was inside Lee JunYeol's waiting room.

"Is your condition alright?"

"Of course, it's the best."

"Today's cloudy so the sound may get heavy. So bear that in mind."

"Okay. You don't have to worry about today, I think."

"What's your evidence for saying that?"

"I have a good feeling."

"I saw many who failed while relying on their feeling."

"You can trust my feeling. I will shock many today."

"Please do. And do well."

KangYoon tapped Lee JunYeol's shoulders once and left the waiting room. Now, he had done everything he could. Preparing for the unforeseen while waiting at the back of the stage for the results – this was what he had to do now.

Lee JunYeol started talking to the coordinator who was making him up while closing his eyes for the foundation.

"HyeJi."

"Yes, oppa."

"How's that oppa?"

"You mean Team Leader Lee KangYoon? He's just... cool, I

guess.”

Lee KangYoon, who set Lee JunYeol straight and made him sing again properly, was also popular amongst the ladies. The reason was that his manliness stood out. The coordinator wasn't that much different, “Hehe, hehehe. That's right, isn't it? Shall I introduce him to you?”

“No way, oppa. Really?”

“Of course it's a joke... Hey, hey!! It's hurting my eyes!!”

The coordinator who rarely made mistakes slipped her hand. Whether it was due to the lie or the embarrassment... Lee JunYeol had his eyes terrorized.

Of course, he reaped what he sowed.

“Welcome to ‘FM and walking’ open broadcast. Hello? I'm Jung ShinHye.”

“Waaaaaaa—!!”

With the greeting of the actress Jung ShinHye, cheers erupted in the crowd and the open broadcast started. Jung ShinHye was loved by the people due to the gentle voice, befitting of her careful image. Today was the same. She attracted the people's gazes with a white one piece that didn't show a lot.

“You can look forward to the people appearing today. The first...”

The number of people increased as time went on. People started gathering in the L-World. 300, 500, 1000. People kept gathering and the heat of the open broadcast became hotter.

“Yes, thank you, people from Echo. There's a singer next, but while he's preparing, why don't we listen to a story?”

KangYoon, who was at the mixer, started becoming nervous while looking at the cue sheet.

‘It’s here.’

After the story, it’s Sedy’s stage. KangYoon’s throat started becoming dry rapidly. He prepared with his best, but a concert was always a chain of uncertainties. In the end, he could only drink water.

“...Unfortunately, this is the last stage.”

People’s disappointment filled the venue.

“However, we’ve brought a person who’s befitting of the last stage. I should say farewell as this is the last stage. Thank you everyone for coming today.”

The people’s clapping burst out. Jung ShinHye continued speaking.

“He’s a really difficult person to find. We didn’t know whether he ascended to the skies or disappeared into the ground, right? But he came back. The Crown Prince of Ballad. It’s singer Sedy!”

“Waaaaa-!!”

The biggest cheers until now erupted from the crowd and Lee JunYeol’s stage began.

Chapter 25: A Plan That Overcomes Blanks

(5)

-I'm still -- In that place — As I always am --

Lee JunYeol's, aka singer Sedy's, song, 'Still' was ringing out the crowd who were immersed in excitement.

The heavy and savory low tone dugged into the audience.

The faint lights became brighter and the stage started going in the main orbit.

KangYoon watched that breathlessly.

'From now on is the real thing.'

The change in key. At this part, KangYoon paid attention to the light emitted from Lee JunYeol.

The lights that the singers emit didn't get hidden by the lighting. Instead, it stood out even more.

The stage effects were important components that made the singer's light become brighter.

KangYoon kept paying attention to whether these effects mixed well with Lee JunYeol.

-While looking at the blurry you — I --

The low tone was becoming higher and higher.

KangYoon paid attention to the audience.

This was the showdown whether the people would accept the change in Sedy's voice or not.

On the stage, a white smoke, made by liquid nitrogen, produced an effect of wonder, and as the lights reflected, the picture of the stage became more beautiful.

'It's here.'

I think about you when I live – – –

The changed key dug KangYoon.

This was the most nervous part.

KangYoon constantly watched the audience's reactions as to whether they received it well or not. The audience that waved, and the audience who listened to the music quietly all came inside his eyes.

-I will think about – – you for – ever – –

The first verse ended. Amidst the accompaniment, KangYoon's eyes became busier. This was an open broadcast. If people didn't like it, it was that harsh.

However, an amazing scene reflected in KangYoon's eyes.

“Sedy!! Sedy!! Sedy Sedy!!”

“I love you, Sedy!!”

Instead, aren't the people rejoicing at the changed voice? Whether it was Lee JunYeol or KangYoon, they became more cheerful due to the passionate reaction from the audience. Especially, Lee JunYeol's vice became more powerful as if he received strength.

-I don't always think about you when I live- – –

At the even more powerful chorus, the audience stood up. No, they rushed out to the front of the stage. At the sudden incident, a situation where the stage management team urgently sent some personnel, happened. However, Sedy lightly waved his hand and became one with everyone. This was stage manners that came from experience.

-I will think about – – you for – ever – –

“I will think about you forever – -”

Even though it was a song the audience heard for the first time,

they started singing along. Sedy's absorption ability was amazing. However, the song hadn't finished yet.

-What do I do — This heart —

I will show you more. – Lee JunYeol's voiced exploded out more and more. As the pitch became higher and the atmosphere became more tense, the people's reactions exploded out more. And the confetti cannons exploded and gold flakes started fluttering throughout the air. Those flakes produced an even more beautiful wonder along with the lighting.

-I will love you – – – forever – – –

The beautiful stage became calmer before it ended with Lee JunYeol's voice alone.

“Thank you.”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!! Sedy, Sedy, Sedy!!”

The song faded out but the people's voice calling Lee JunYeol only became bigger. While feeling touched, Lee JunYeol did a thumbs up towards KangYoon at the back of the stage. KangYoon also silently nodded. You did well, you worked hard – these were his meanings.

Lee JunYeol successfully made a comeback splendidly.

Grandly and beautifully amidst the crowd's cheering after his 2 years of blank.

“Thank you for your hard work!! Everybody cheers!!”

“Cheers!!”

After the open broadcast had ended, Lee JunYeol said he would treat the people who worked hard and held a get-together. Perhaps due to the successful stage, Lee JunYeol seemed delighted as he shouted ‘cheers’ while going around. His wholehearted feelings could be felt from the way he poured the alcohol to everyone.

Leaving the loud table, KangYoon quietly tilted his beer glass. In his front was President Kim TaeHoon.

“Team Leader, thank you for your work. Please, have a cup.”

“Thank you.”

The two poured alcohol into each other's glasses and started talking after clashing their cups. Of course, the topic was the comeback stage that happened today.

“It's the first time I've seen such an amazing stage like today's. It wasn't his exclusive concert or anything, but everybody shouting out Sedy's name and... I was just moved. I still can't forget the people's figures shouting Sedy even though it had been 2 years. Team Leader, I thank you again.”

President Kim TaeHoon even teared up. He put all his effort into returning Lee JunYeol back to being a singer after he had to stop due to his throat. However, the path was long and distant. Lee JunYeol kept straying and the company became harder to manage. In the end, they recorded as a last time, but the comeback stage was no good. KangYoon was the one who appeared then.

“This is the beginning. The marketing from now on, and managing that bomb is in your hands, President.”

“Hahaha, A bomb, you say. You're right. He's a bomb.”

“Today will just become the foothold. The event in the future or TV programs – all of them is in your hands, President. You will have to work hard.”

“I know. I won't get pushed around by JunYeol like I did in the past. I learnt a lot from you, Team Leader. Such as that you have to speak what you have to.”

Going with whatever the singer says, just because that person was a superstar, made Duka Entertainment arrive at a crisis. President Kim TaeHoon resolved again and again that it wouldn't happen again in the future.

“I would like to see you for an exclusive concert next time.”

“Hahaha, If you do, then we’re the ones who are thankful. An exclusive concert, eh.”

“It will definitely become like that. This time, we will make it happen.”

KangYoon laughed. An exclusive concert was a glory for a singer, and a cash cow for a company. There were many singers who failed after doing exclusive concerts and gathering 50 to 100 audiences and made a massive amount of losses, but an exclusive concert was also something that could make huge amounts of profit and tell the world about the singer’s position. Of course, it was also an enormous business with an enormous initial budget, and a plan that could match the popularity of the singer.

While the two were talking about their dreams and hopes for the future, an uninvited guest chimed in.

“What’s up with the two of you? Are you talking about boring stuff again? KangYoon-hyung. You didn’t even receive one from me.”

“Gimme one here.”

“Oh? It’s a glass poured by Sedy and you’re receiving with just one hand?”

“Just do it.”

Along with KangYoon’s chic words, the happy eating atmosphere continued throughout the night.

“Blergh!!”

“No, why did you have a drinking bet with JunYeol-Hyung...”

In some alley.

Manager Yu SeungCheol complained a lot while tapping KangYoon’s back. However, it wasn’t the normal KangYoon, so he

couldn't say anything. KangYoon, who was vomiting assiduously, was currently...

...A pizza factory.

“Seo HanYu, Seo HanYu!!”

The trainer called Seo HanYu who was absent. It was the 4th day already.

“Christie, you use the same room as HanYu, right?”

“Yes.”

“Isn't there anything strange about her?”

The trainer asked seriously. However, Christie said ‘don't know’ and shook her head.

“If it's late for 4 days, then it's even punishable. Sigh, it became bi...”

At that moment, the door opened and someone entered. It was KangYoon.

“Did Seo HanYu come?”

“That...”

When KangYoon directly asked, the trainer also avoided answering. The fact that the utmost person in charge was asking himself meant that it was very serious. The other girls, too, couldn't flinch due to the nervousness.

“I understand. Please continue.”

KangYoon placed himself in one corner and sat. At that, the other girls whispered to each other.

‘Hey, is HanYu getting cut?’

‘Then we're becoming a team of 5?’

‘Dunno, Oh, why is this happening so soon?’

‘She will work something out by herself..’

From complaining girl to worrying girl to uninterested girl, they were all different.

The practice started regardless of what they thought.

It was a training to match each other’s movement following the fast music, However, it didn’t seem easy, as their timings were all over the place.

“MinAh is too fast and Ailee is too slow. How many times do I have to say this to you? You need to see each other’s rhythms.”

They heard ‘to match each other’s rhythms’ countless time but, everyone’s expressions were ones that didn’t understand. The trainer seemed stifled as he smacked his chest.

“Your beats are strangely off. You need to match that. In the future, you will proceed together, won’t you? Ok, again.”

A fast beat music flowed out again. However...

“Jung MinAh. You’re too fast. Are you dancing alone? Han JooYeon, it’s not that way.”

The trainer’s words continued. As their timings were off, the girls were on different waves. However, it wasn’t so easily fixed.

‘I don’t think they have the intention to match each other.’

As KangYoon saw it, Jung MinAh was too stubborn. Definitely, Jung MinAh’s dancing was the best. It was as if she spoke ‘you girls follow me’ when she danced. In contrast, Ailee was lacking the most in regards to dancing. As she always was half a beat late, in the end, she became one beat off from Jung MinAh.

Of course, the lights that KangYoon saw was all over the place as well.

‘Did I pick the wrong people?’

It was to the point that when he saw the practice, he even

thought of this. However, he just thought of it as because it was in they were in the initial stages so KangYoon calmly watched. These were the trainees he selected. He had to believe them.

While they were absorbed in training, the door carefully opened and Seo HanYu came in. She repeatedly said sorry and stood in front of the trainer. However, the trainer who would've scolded her a lot normally, pointed towards KangYoon expressionlessly.

“Go there.”

‘Whoa...!!’

The moment she saw KangYoon, Seo HanYu almost suffocated. Why was KangYoon, who was supposed to be at his office, here... KangYoon was the highest person in charge of her. And at this timing...

Seo HanYu closed her eyes and went in front of KangYoon.

“Let’s go.”

KangYoon indifferently spoke and took Seo HanYu outside.

‘Whoa. I think something big will happen today.’

Ailee whispered in worry. However, Jung MinAh nailed it.

‘She brought it on herself, what can we do?’

‘Even so...’

“There!! Stop chatting and practice!!”

Of course, the girls who whispered to each other only received an earful from the trainer.

2nd floor rest area.

KangYoon and Seo HanYu were silent for 10 minutes.

“.....”

“.....”

KangYoon didn't say anything. There was no way that Seo HanYu didn't know. She was late for 4 days. She wouldn't be able to say anything even if she was according to MG Entertainment's rules and regulations. Due to the characteristics of the entertainment industry of having to be on time, rules on absences and being late were very strict.

However, KangYoon waited. Until she spoke.

“...Team Leader.”

“.....”

KangYoon didn't say anything. Seo HanYu always spoke vaguely. Her open mouth indicated that she was hesitating. However, KangYoon chose waiting rather than scolding.

“.....”

“I was late due to... a part time job.”

“A part time job?”

Trainees were realistically forbidden from part time jobs. Of course, the rules were different according to the company, but MG Entertainment strictly forbade it. It was because of the reason that a trainee had school as his/her part time job. However, KangYoon didn't talk about the rules.

“My household became difficult... So...”

“Is it for living expenses?”

“...Yes.”

“Why were you late.”

Seo HanYu said that to not be late, she had to take the bus on time. However, when she missed the bus, she was 30 minutes late and it piled up to become 4 days.

“...I'm sorry.”

“Did something happen suddenly? What do you mean your

household became difficult?”

“.....”

“The reason for your part time job. What part time job is it? Tell me.”

KangYoon spoke calmly. However, to Seo HanYu, who was listening, it came to her scarily. ‘You’re doing a part time job? Let me hear the reason. What are you doing?’(T/N: Say it condescendingly). To Seo HanYu, it sounded like that.

“...Fastfood. The reason is... well...”

“I’m not trying to scold you. You have to tell me about your situation for me to think up of a solution.”

“A... solution? Will I be kicked out?”

Seo HanYu’s head dropped down. It was the 4th time late. She had no excuses no matter what punishment she received. Of course, being late wasn’t a reason to be kicked out. However, Seo HanYu was scared.

However, what KangYoon was thinking was largely different to what she was thinking.

“You will have to pay the price for going against the rules.”

“.....”

Seo HanYu’s expression became even darker. She came here after practicing so much, she expected that she would be scolded, but it was more strict than she thought.

However, KangYoon’s words didn’t end there.

“Why did your household become difficult?”

“Sorry?”

“The reason.”

Seo HanYu hesitated for a bit before speaking with difficulty.

“My mother... was diagnosed with cancer.”

“Cancer?”

KangYoon realized why he saw Seo HanYu at the hospital. It was to visit her mother.

Seo HanYu's household was an ordinary 4-person household. Her father commuted to a big company, and her mother was a housewife. Seo HanYu ordinarily went to school before following her friend to an audition before getting accepted, and after that, her life as a trainee began.

The problem occurred recently. After her mother was diagnosed and hospitalized with cancer, a huge amount of money was spent. Even with her father's salary from going to a big company, it wasn't easy to afford. While looking at her household becoming more and more difficult, Seo HanYu eventually decided to work a part time job.

“...I'm sorry.”

After finishing her story, Seo HanYu drooped her head. Her feeble shoulders were trembling and tears were dropping on the floor.

KangYoon pitied her such figure. However, he calmly, but cool-headedly spoke.

“So you had that kind of reason. However, HanYu. While I do understand that you did a part time job with difficulty, being late is being late. You understand that, right?”

“.....Yes.”

“You will have to prepare yourself for a punishment. It's a late so I plan to do it myself.”

KangYoon calmed himself down for a brief moment before speaking.

“A warning, and 3 days of suspension. This will be officialized

tomorrow.”

“...Yes. I’m sorry.”

“And stop the part time job immediately.”

KangYoon’s judgement was cool-headed. No, it was strictly brutal. For a trainee, a suspension was very heavy. A trainee with a record of suspension, would be recorded by the company. That record would follow the trainee everywhere and hinder his/her path. Whether it was the singer audition, or even while moving to another company. It was in a sense, the Scarlet Letter.

Seo HanYu went back to practice and KangYoon was left alone in the rest area.

‘I should look up the personnel record card. That was in HeeYoon’s hospital right?’

KangYoon planned to meet Seo HanYu’s mother. He had to strike the iron while he was hot. So after confirming HanYu’s mother’s name, he headed for the hospital straight away.

Chapter 26: Earning Trust (1)

“Is it that?”

KangYoon walked towards the ward with 1509 written on the door with big steps. He didn't want to come to the hospital other than with Hee Yoon, but today, he even bought a fruits basket and went inside.

“Who is it?”

As soon as KangYoon went in, a middle-woman with a skinny body figure greeted him after looking outside the window blankly.

“Hello? I'm Lee KangYoon who's in charge of trainee Seo HanYu.”

“O, oh. Why did the Team Leader come to a place like this?”

There was no way that Seo HanYu's mother didn't know of KangYoon. It was because of the influence of the story that Seo HanYu always talked about – that he was selected by the team leader to become a singer. To think that she would meet him in the hospital ward, Seo HanYu's mother was slightly embarrassed. It was because of the no make-up face and the now almost gone hair. She quickly wore a hat and looked at the mirror before greeting KangYoon properly.

“No, I should have looked for you earlier, I apologize.”

“No, it's nothing. HanYu's doing well at the company, right?”

“Yes, of course.”

The topic that mothers like the most is about her child. Seo HanYu's mother wasn't an exception. KangYoon talked a lot of her child. From that she was an honors student at the company to the fact that she would become this type of singer so she didn't need to worry – KangYoon's story made her immersed.

When about 1 hour had passed since KangYoon came, Seo

HanYu's father came in. Perhaps due to having come here straight from the company, he was still in a suit. He panicked when he saw a man he had never seen before inside the ward.

"Dear, this person is..."

"Honey, introduce yourself. This is our daughter HanYu's Team Leader at the company. The Team Leader that HanYu always talked about that he selected her."

"Oooh!! Nice to meet you!!"

Unlike the quiet mother, Seo HanYu's father was quite unrestrained. He shook his hands with KangYoon and offered him to seat before giving him various things to eat and started asking various things. It seemed as if Seo HanYu's father also wanted to know a lot about his daughter as KangYoon had to say what he already said again. However, KangYoon didn't show any signs of discomfort.

As they had talked for a long time, Seo HanYu's mother fell asleep due to fatigue. KangYoon and Seo HanYu's father went outside to have a smoke together.

"Thank you,"

Seo HanYu's father lighted KangYoon's cigarette. The two's white breath of smoke sattered in the sky.

"How's the madam's condition?"

Finally, KangYoon could ask what he really wanted to ask. These were things he couldn't ask easily inside the ward.

"She's in the mid stages of liver cancer. They said she can get cured so we need to put in more effort. Like managing meticulously."

"Sounds difficult."

"No, the heads of households don't know things like that. It's alright."

KangYoon deeply sympathized with those words. The head of household was a strong existence. If one had something to protect then he would become stronger than anyone. Like KangYoon himself.

“Did something perhaps happen to our HanYu?”

“.....”

The talk between men were serious. While the cigarette smoke scattered, Seo HanYu’s father predicted that KangYoon had something to say.

“Did something happen to...”

“No, don’t you know well? That HanYu’s hardworking.”

“I do. She’s too uptight – if that can be considered a problem.”

“That’s right. So I came.”

“So something did happen...”

KangYoon excused himself and took out another smoke. He didn’t smoke a lot but strangely, he craved for a smoke now. Seo HanYu’s father also seemed to have been effected as he also lit another one.

“HanYu worked part-time. She said it was fast food.”

“Part-time... Does the company forbid part time jobs?”

“Yes. We exclude everything that can distract practice. Thanks to that, HanYu received punishment.”

“Punishment? Then...”

“It’s not a big one. It’s just a 3 days of suspension. Of course, there will be no hindrances in her path to become a singer so you can rest assured. The reason I came here is because I know that HanYu will keep doing the part time job in the future. I came here to put a stop to it.”

“Isn’t a 3 day suspension a big thing? Continue the part time job?”

What do you mean by...”

“Of course, suspension is a big punishment. However, what I can assure you now is that there will be no hindrances in her path to becoming a singer and her activities as one. I will take responsibility in that regard.”

While looking at Seo HanYu’s father who was dumbfounded at the word ‘suspension’, KangYoon slightly hesitated for a moment. Sticking his nose into other household’s business was a very rude thing. However, if he didn’t do that now, then HanYu may encounter a bigger problem in the future. KangYoon set his mind and spoke.

“I truly excuse myself, but I know that your household is becoming difficult due to the treatment for cancer. Thanks to that, HanYu is also doing a part time job.”

“Ha... that child... she doesn’t need to... Yes you’re right. We are a bit tight on our living expenses but it’s at a level I can manage with my salary. And there’s money saved up until now too.”

“HanYu doesn’t seem to know that well. A child like HanYu is a type that will keep repeating an action that she was forced to stop when she judges that it’s the correct thing to do. If that happens, I have to stick to the principles even if I wanted to work with HanYu for a long time... I want to work with her for a long time. Please help.”

Seo HanYu’s father could clearly understand this person called KangYoon. He was worried a lot about his daughter since he had heard that a lot of people who only talked about making someone into a singer. However, to think this person had come to find him for this... This kind of person was rare nowadays. From what he heard, companies treated trainees like disposable items, but this person was completely different.

“I understand. I will talk to HanYu about this.”

“I heard that HanYu listened to her father’s words well. As far as I know, her most respected person is her father.”

“Hoho. Is that so. Don’t worry. And thank you.”

After requesting once more to Seo HanYu’s father, KangYoon left the hospital.

On his bus home, KangYoon thought about Seo HanYu.

‘In the ‘past’, Seo HanYu, in other words, singer Yun(T/N: her stage name) never spoke about her mother. And for some reason, she didn’t like the company that much. The first one to move in the recontract season was also Yun. Wasn’t that because there was something like this related to her mother? I don’t want this to turn out badly...’

While crossing the Hangang bridge, KangYoon briefly closed his eyes while thinking about a lot of things.

The next day.

A frightening notice came to the girls’ practice room.

“Seo HanYu’s suspended for 3 days. Reason is late for 4 days.”

“Eek?!”

The 6 girls, including Seo HanYu who wasn’t late today, widened their eyes after hearing the bomb dropping from the trainer.

“What? 3 days of suspension because being late for 4 times?”

“Singer classes are no joke.”

Jung MinAh and Lee SamSoon were surprised and spoke a line each. The other girls also whispered to each other.

“Quiet, quiet!! Seo HanYu, practice until today and go home for today. You know that you can’t use the dorms during suspension, right?”

“Yes.”

“Well then, shall we start today’s practice?”

Without even time to chat, the practice had begun. As always, the girls’ practices progressed strictly and they continued until the girls all collapsed due to exhaustion.

“Thank you for your hard work.”

After the practice ended, the girls dragged their exhausted bodies to the shower rooms. The girls who emitted a thick smell of sweat and steam, weren’t bright teens anymore.

“Ah... What kind of practice...is so hard...”

The always carefree Lee SamSoon also limped when the practice ended. She didn’t even know how resting period went by. Practice, and more practice. The dumb spartan practice made them shiver just by thinking about it.

“Ah, I want to sleep just like thiiiiis...”

Jung MinAh, who was always lively, also had loose eyes. She seemed like she would sleep the moment she lies down.

“It’s so crazy!! I’m...” (spoken in English.)

“Close her mouth. She’s speaking in English again.”

“!@#\$%!!”

From Ailee Jung, who was spouting something in English, to Jung MinAh who hated it, and Han JooYeon, who acted. – They were exhausted due to practice, but they were becoming closer while playing around like this.

After the shower, they changed their clothes and they found that all the practice rooms were dark.

“We’re always last.”

Christie An complained. After being selected for the singer class, they didn’t finish before other practice rooms went dark. The other girls were the same in complaining.

Originally, they would return to the dorms together with all 6 of them, but today was different, Seo HanYu went home, and the rest headed to the dorms.

“Should I be late and get some punishment too?”

“What are you saying?”

As she was jealous of Seo HanYu going home, Ailee Jung spoke a line before getting an earful from Christie An. There was nothing good with a punishment record. If rumors spread then they may even get affected if they take an audition.

And when the girls were chatting and leaving the company lobby, there was a guest who waited for Seo HanYu at the entrance. It was Seo HanYu’s father.

“Huh? Dad.”

“HanYu.”

“Hello.”

Seo HanYu’s father had parked the car and was waiting for his daughter.

The girls exchanged greetings with Seo HanYu’s father before parting soon. Seo HanYu’s father gave them some money to buy drinks and the girls rejoiced. And naturally, Seo HanYu’s value rose.

On the way home, Seo HanYu asked her father inside the car.

“How did you come here?”

“I was called by your Team Leader.”

“Team Leader? Team Leader KangYoon?”

Seo HanYu widened her eyes as she thought it was unexpected. Why did the Team Leader do that? She couldn’t figure out the reason.

“The Team Leader said that you will finish around this time and

told me to pick you up. I thought that it will be good for us father and daughter to have a conversation since this father was preoccupied with your mother nowadays and didn't have time to speak to you. And so, I came here."

"Dad..."

"Don't be so touched. There's nothing nowadays, right?"

"There isn't. I'm alright."

Seo HanYu was as mature-acting as always. She was kind-hearted, good, and kind towards everyone. However, there were things that she suppressed in her heart. Her father wanted to hear those.

"I heard you were working part-time nowadays."

"You knew?"

"I heard. From that Team Leader."

"Oh... Did you meet the Team Leader? Did you perhaps..."

"I know everything. I heard you get to rest for 3 days this time. Think of it as vacation and rest deeply. Your Team Leader also told me to tell you that."

"Did the Team Leader... say that? Wait, before that, you met the Team Leader, dad?"

"He came to the hospital, he visited your mother."

Seo HanYu received a big shock. She didn't think that KangYoon would visit her sick mother even in her dreams. KangYoon mercilessly gave her a punishment without holding back after he knew that she did a part-time job. Although she did think that the punishment was natural, the bloodless tearless figure came to her as a sad thing but to think... a sick visit.

The surprise didn't end there.

"He also talked a lot about you before leaving. He said that you

can become a good singer if you work hard like this. However, he was disappointed that you're rotting your talent and possibilities while doing things like a part-time job. HanYu, dear, the house is alright. I can afford all the treatment that your mother receives. So you don't have to do something like a part-time job."

"Dad, but..."

"You focus on becoming a singer. My daughter does everything well when she sets her mind to it, right?"

"Even so..."

"Understand?"

Seo HanYu didn't have the personality to reject her father's soft offer. The authority of a father had such power. In fact, she herself knew already – that it wasn't the time to do a part-time job.

"Is the house really alright?"

"You can't trust your dad?"

"It's not that... No, I understand."

Seo HanYu, in the end, closed her thoughts about part-time jobs which took a corner of her heart. She literally decided to focus on one thing.

"Good, good. HanYu, dad is feeling good so allow me to sm..."

"Never."

Her father felt down when he took out a cigarette only to put it back again.

The earful of a daughter was always frightening.

The atmosphere inside the car with the father and daughter was happy.

The car crossed a bridge where a beautiful night scenery could be seen and they quietly headed home.

Chapter 27: Earning Trust (2)

A fresh morning. HeeYoon had made Doenjang Jjigae and was eating breakfast together with KangYoon.

However, she put her spoon down when she heard strange words from KangYoon.

“Huh? What are you saying from the morning, oppa?”

“If you finish school today, then come to this place – XX station 2nd exit...”

However KangYoon didn't explain anything to HeeYoon in detail. He just said for her to come to that address and gave her a simple map. Obviously, HeeYoon couldn't understand her brother's words.

“We're moving now and you haven't told me anything? You should've said something beforehand. We'll have to pack things up and look for a house too. And to do that, we need money too.....”

HeeYoon blurred her words at the end. She knew how much money KangYoon invested in her dialysis fees and various diagnosis fees every month. So if he bought a house, then that would be a debt. Debt. As she heard that many people were going into debt to buy houses from the news, HeeYoon didn't feel that good about going to a new house.

However, KangYoon continued speaking as if saying ‘just believe in me’.

“Don't worry. I called the movers. I took half the day off and will go to the company later, and HeeYoon, you can just go there if you finish school.”

“But, oppa. There must be a lot to prepare...”

“There isn't that much. The movers would do the work. I will take care of it so just go to school. Didn't we have a hard time now

since we were so far away from school and work? The hospital was far too. Now, we're moving to a better place. Okay?"

"Where do we have the money to..."

HeeYoon felt unreal. She, who even worried about housekeeping, matured quickly like KangYoon. KangYoon softly brushed her hair and alleviated some of her worry.

"Even if you don't say that, it's a monthly rent. Let's move to a better place next time."

It had been half a year since he was employed at MG Entertainment, HeeYoon marvelled at her brother. They were siblings who lived in this tattered house until now trying to save expenses for the treatment. Although a monthly rent, to think that they were leaving this place in less than 1 year... Just thinking about that, HeeYoon was touched.

"Oppa, thanks. And you've suffered."

"What suffering. It's not that good of a place. It's a detached house, but it won't be uncomfortable for the two of us to live together. There is even a yard and hot water."

"Really?"

At the word 'hot water', Hee Yoon was delighted. The life of heating water to have a bath due to no running hot water was no more.

"We should install a bidet too, right?"

"Oppa!!"

Perhaps feeling embarrassed at KangYoon's last words, HeeYoon's face turned red and KangYoon laughed loudly.

Lunch time.

KangYoon had his lunch in the 1st floor cafeteria. Normally, he would have lunch with Chairman Won JinMoon or President Lee

HyunJi while talking about work, but today he was free from that. The two in question were in Japan due to important work.

“Good afternoon!”

“Hello.”

Each and every one of the trainees who met KangYoon in the cafeteria bowed 90 degrees while greeting. Everyone was disciplined well. They received their meals and had their meals together in groups. Their figures of chatting and playing around indicated that they were in the end, teens.

‘Good times.’

While thinking like an old man, KangYoon shrugged his shoulders. To think those playful boys and girls will become singers... It was a wonder just thinking about it.

While having lunch, a person came and stood in front of him with a tray in her hands.

“G, good afternoon.”

“Oh, HanYu, hello.”

It was Seo HanYu in her school uniform. She was hesitating whether to sit down or not.

“Sit.”

“Oh, thank you.”

As soon as KangYoon’s permission fell, she sat in front of KangYoon with frightening speed. She mixed the Bibimbap that she got and took a spoonful in her mouth. Perhaps due to liking spicy food, it was very red.

“It’s not spicy?”

“I like spicy things.”

“Really? Have a nice meal.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon didn't say much after that. Did you rest well, how was it, are you stopping your part time job – all these were absent. He literally kept lifting his spoon up and down. Seo HanYu hesitated for a moment before speaking first.

“Team Leader.”

“What is it?”

“Thank you for minding about me.”

KangYoon smiled without saying anything. She was a person who will go together with him in the future. It was an obvious thing to do. At KangYoon's smile, Seo HanYu seemed to have become more enthusiastic as she continued.

“I heard you went to visit my mother. I won't forget that you've done various things for me.”

“I didn't do anything much.”

“No, there wasn't anyone until now who minded so much about me. Really... thank you.”

To Seo HanYu, there wasn't anyone like KangYoon until now. She never told anyone that her mother was sick. KangYoon had known about a thing that even the company didn't know about, comforted her mother, and moreover, comforted her father. What KangYoon gave her was safety and the trust of her family.

Seo HanYu could still remember the scene where her mother told her to do her best to become a singer, vividly in her mind. Whether he knew or not, KangYoon was no different from his ordinary self.

“I already told you. That we're doing this together. It's an obvious thing to do.”

“Yes. You've talked to my father about it, too, haven't you? That you will definitely make me a singer.”

KangYoon said that she will become a good singer. However, words differed according to how a person accepted it. Moreover,

the person in charge of Seo HanYu was KangYoon. The words ‘Seo HanYu will become a good singer’ meant that he will make her into one. Of course, KangYoon never planned to throw her away from the beginning.

“Well... that.”

“I will answer to your expectations no matter what, Team Leader.”

“Y...yeah. Please do.”

The lights in Seo HanYu’s eyes looking at KangYoon changed. At Seo HanYu’s figure, who felt like she would believe even if KangYoon said water was fire, he felt unreal. He had received no such trust even in his ‘past’. He even thought randomly that he might be fooling a girl now that he had received full trust from her.

Even so, he felt good. It was always delightful to receive someone’s trust. However, KangYoon was a person who will definitely speak what he had to speak.

“Don’t be late from now on.”

“Yes, sir. I definitely won’t.”

“... You don’t have to be so strict with yourself.”

“Yes.”

Of course, KangYoon instead felt embarrassed.

He couldn’t adapt easily to Seo HanYu’s tense discipline.

Now that he had finished Sedy’s comeback stage and dealt with Seo HanYu’s matter, KangYoon’s office had some leisure. There weren’t many documents that awaited his approvals, and there weren’t anything he had to report to his superiors.

KangYoon was feeling rather relaxed for the first time in a while.

‘This is good.’

He couldn't be any happier now that he was resting while lying on the sofa without the regard for time. But who said it? That Korean companies never tolerated sights of an employee resting. A call came to KangYoon's office.

-Team Leader Lee. This is the presidential secretary room. The President calls for you.

KangYoon felt absurd and he blinked a few times. President Lee HyunJi was supposed to be in Japan now. But a sudden call... When he asked, the reply was simple.

-She just came back to her office now. She said her schedule was cancelled...

'Oh...'

KangYoon deeply sighed. It was a resting time he rarely had but the timing wasn't good. KangYoon replied ok and went upstairs to the President's office.

In the office, President Lee HyunJi was looking at some documents with an exhausted face.

"Welcome, Team Leader Lee."

"Did you call for me?"

Traces of the flight was still left on her as President Lee HyunJi looked very tired. However, she didn't show it on the surface and held out the document to KangYoon.

'SeasonS Yen department store open event mini concert?'

KangYoon flipped one page. On the first page, it was grandly written that Yen department store, Daejeon branch, will open in spring, and that there were many singers coming to celebrate.

"The important thing is at the back."

KangYoon kept flipping the pages. There was an incomplete setlist. The cast and the MC, the supported equipment, etc. were briefly written. KangYoon found that the word SeasonS was

ticked.

“SeasonS? Do I read this as ‘seasons’?”

“Call it however you’re comfortable with. It’s a quartet girl group that debuted frequently. They belong to Dumaz Entertainment. A work came from them. They want a hot issue from this stage.”

“A hot issue? Noise marketing on the internet is not my area of expertise.”

KangYoon cut it sharp. Although he had to try to know, but momentary stimulation would just get swallowed up in other noise. To make it last, they had to do become big properly. They had to improve their ability and make themselves remain in people’s memories. This was KangYoon’s philosophy.

“I also don’t want noise marketing. And so I told them – Noise marketing is impossible. However, it’s possible to make a performance that can engrave them in the people’s hearts.”

KangYoon fell into thought. A department store, where a lot of people come, usually had a space to install a temporary stage, or it had a small stage. However, the space wasn’t that big.

“The stage in the department store is narrow. It’s questionable whether we can use the setting that we want.”

“From that, it’s your area of expertise. The condition is a performance that can be engraved in people’s hearts. There are no other conditions, including one about the audience. Excluding the fact that there are a few well-known singers, the condition isn’t that strict.”

“That is exactly a strict condition. We will take a loss starting with the order of sequence. If our turn is just after a famous singer, then we will start with a huge minus.”

“You’ll have to negotiate with the related personnel for that. Dumaz Entertainment said this – that they will do everything as Team Leader Lee says. I’ve already told them so there won’t be any

noise.”

“.....”

KangYoon sighed deeply. The stage was small. Moreover, the audience was unpredictable whether it was age or gender. There was no such thing as a ‘good condition’ for a new singer.

‘Everything as I say...’

But there was hope. There was an element of negotiation with the venue itself, and it was already negotiated that the singers would follow KangYoon’s orders. If so, then there was a room to breakthrough.

“I understand. I will try.”

“I will look forward to it. I expect a cool result like last time.”

After accepting, KangYoon left the President’s office.

‘Shall I go right away?’

KangYoon went straight to Dumaz Entertainment to meet the girl group known as SeasonS. When he contacted them beforehand, they said that they welcomed him anytime. KangYoon drove a car for about 20 minutes and arrived in front of Dumaz Entertainment.

‘Well, it’s certainly better than Duka...’

This was KangYoon’s first evaluation on Dumaz Entertainment after seeing that they had a whole 2-storey building to themselves, despite being tattered. Dumaz Entertainment, which modified an apartment, used their ground floor for guest rooms and offices and the first floor as the dorms.

KangYoon opened the door and went inside. Inside, there were two people – the Accountant and the President.

“Welcome. I’m called Yoon MoonSoo.”

“I’m Lee KangYoon.”

President Yoon MoonSoo and KangYoon exchanged greetings and sat down face to face after receiving the coffee the accountant made. KangYoon and President Yoon MoonSoo talked about the latest topics and the singers before going into topic.

“I heard about the work. I’ve heard the condition that you want a stage that’s eye-catching.”

“I want to raise their popularity during this opportunity. Is it possible?”

“To be honest, for popularity, a TV programme would be better.”

KangYoon was confused. Just why were they aiming to increase their popularity in something like a countryside event? If it was popularity, it was better to go to a TV programme or a TV stage. KangYoon was on the side of receiving work, but as a 3rd party, he said coldly.

“You’re right. However, a TV programme is hard to do without popularity. The programmes that we can appear in are all occupied by the entertainment companies that have power... So don’t you think that we should use whatever means to survive?”

The power of an entertainment company, in the end, lay in money. The pay for a programme that the populace like was in no way, high. However, it had the power to tell their existence to the people and so, powerful entertainment companies use their power of money to the TV stations. Other than money, they also use methods where they use an already risen star. Thanks to that, the entertainment companies that appeared recently had hard times telling their existences to the world.

“I understand. I will try. I will do my best.”

“Thank you.”

KangYoon requested to meet SeasonS as soon as he accepted the request. President Yoon MoonSoo said that they had no schedule so they were practicing, so he led KangYoon to the 1st floor.

‘Whoa...’

KangYoon, who arrived at the 1st floor, was really surprised. He had seen many places but a place like this where the all the walls of the living room were covered in mirrors, was a first. They didn’t have a practice room, so they widened the whole living room and modified the walls by attaching mirrors to practice. This was a figure of a stereotypical singer who sang for a living.

“Oppa, you’re here?”

After turning off the music, Jang HanNa ran to the front of President Yoon MoonSoo and KangYoon. She didn’t seem to have realized that KangYoon was there as she only greeted President Yoon MoonSoo delightly. And when she found KangYoon, she lowered her head.

“G, good afternoon. I’m HanNa, the leader of SeasonS.”

Jang HanNa hurriedly turned back to organize her messy hair. The other members behind her also hurriedly organized their clothes and hair. They all complained in their hearts – why didn’t he tell us that a guest was coming?

After a brief moment, KangYoon could received the organized greeting from SeasonS.

“Good afternoon. We’re SeasonS.”

“Hello.”

KangYoon and SeasonS, who finished their greetings, started talking about the performance.

“Can’t we just do the title song?”

At KangYoon’s question of what they wanted to do, Moon JiHye replied immediately. And after that, Kang HyeSeon followed her.

“Unni, what do you mean by just the title. We need to do the others too.”

“Is that so?”

The two chatted to each other before becoming silent due to Jang HanNa's gaze.

“Why don't we rearrange the title song? Like in the end of year award ceremonies.”

“HaNeul, the people don't know of our songs. We should let them know about it first.”

When Song HaNeul voiced out her opinion, Kang HyeSeon retorted immediately. The two started fighting and in the end, also got scolded from Jang HanNa.

KangYoon didn't stop the SeasonS members from talking freely. A lot of things came out. There were talks to change the title song, arrangement, and there were even talks to do a completely different song. KangYoon organized those ideas on his notes.

While those girls were chatting, KangYoon gathered their attention.

“Please pay attention for a bit.”

“Yes.”

The SeasonS members replied well. They were bright girls from the beginning. However, they also boasted of a lot of noise – just like how there was shadow if there was light. One word lead to many words, and KangYoon decided in just one sentence.

“...Let's just go with whatever we have.”

“Yes...”

With KangYoon's one line, the discussion ended. The SeasonS members who exchanged opinions with liveliness all drooped their shoulders at KangYoon's clear-cut words. Whether it was President Yoon MoonSoo or those girls, they were disappointed that KangYoon seemed to be the same as other planners.

However, KangYoon's words didn't end there.

“However, let's combine many things in it. To give an impact.”

KangYoon's turnaround words made everyone shrug their shoulders in excitement.

Chapter 28: A Stage That Widens Stages (1)

“By impactful combination, do you mean arrangement?”

“That is so.”

“It will take a lot of money, though...”

President Yoon MoonSoo expressed his difficulty as he was worried. For a small entertainment company, budget was always a pressure. However, KangYoon was firm in his decision.

“It’s a necessary investment. And there won’t be a lot of parts arranged. At most, it will be 1 minute. And it’s an arrangement to fit that 1 minute. There isn’t much arrangement so we need to negotiate well with the composer. Although well-known composers have good ability, we’ll have to go for a not well-known one.”

“An unconfirmed one... Do you have anyone you know?”

President Yoon MoonSoo was worried. However, the risk of no money was very big. In the end, it had forcefully made him select that choice.

However, unlike President Yoon MoonSoo who was worrying, KangYoon had assurance.

‘That composer should have started being active about now, right?’

There was one person he could think of. In KangYoon’s past, he was a composer who worked with the pen name YHB. Now was a period where this person was criticized a lot for his horrible compositions. However, he was also a person who would rise high in just 1 year.

“Don’t worry about the money for the song. I will make it that we use as little budget as possible. I know that it’s an invasion of rights for a planner to intrude on this, but as you want something

more than just a performance, please understand me.”

“I understand.”

President Yoon MoonSoo obeyed KangYoon’s words. It was an event he found with a lot of difficulty. A TV programme stage was distant and it wasn’t easy to find a countryside event either. Despite that, it was fortunate that this event was quite a large-scale one. He was desperate for this opportunity.

“When are we in the order of sequence?”

When Song HaNeul asked, KangYoon flipped the setlist and answered.

“We’re 4th from the back.”

“A lot of people will only gather if it’s the first or last... how long is the time?”

“It says 4 minutes.”

“So short...”

Song HaNeul muttered as if she was disappointed. She debuted as a singer but as she didn’t have many opportunities on stage, she had a lot of desire to go on stages. KangYoon replied immediately as if he had heard those words.

“We can’t do anything about the time. However, we should try to change the order of sequence. It’s a department store event. In such places, people come to see popular singers and not unpopular singers. They won’t give you much time.”

“We know that too...”

Kang HyeSeon expressed her rage a little as if her pride was attacked. She had thought that they were ignored when he said ‘unpopular’. However, KangYoon had only told the truth, he had no malicious intentions.

“Then we’re just sidekicks for those popular singers?”

Song HaNeul asked directly. She didn't want to show it, but the word 'unpopular' had struck where it hurts. Not only her, everyone else became depressed as their pride as singers were cut. However, KangYoon coldly spoke the truth.

"If we go without any preparation, then we'll just be sidekicks. However.."

"However?"

"If we prepare meticulously, we may as well be the main character."

At KangYoon's turnaround, everyone focused their attention on him. The members of SeasonS were girls who had different expressions every hour. KangYoon found it curious that they could express such a variety of expressions.

"We need to do something transcendent that's out of people's expectations. This will be our objective."

"A transcendent stage that's out of people's expectations?"

The members of SeasonS were all sinking into KangYoon's words with HanNa as the head. They were all bewitched at his words as if those words were like magic.

"Uwaaah..."

HeeYoon, who arrived at the new house after finishing school, exclaimed when she saw the neat yard and the tree inside it. A dog house placed in one corner, and a shed to boot... As she had only seen houses which looked like they were about to collapse, such a house was a new world to her.

"Oppa doesn't seem to be here yet."

HeeYoon, who entered after pressing the password to the house, couldn't adapt to the wide living room she had seen for the first time. The living room floor was wide and clean, and there was even a TV hung on the wall, a latest trend. To HeeYoon, who

couldn't talk to her friends a lot as there was no TV in the old house, everything was a new world to her including the large TV.

“.....This is my room?”

When she opened the door to the room that she estimated to be hers, a bed she had never seen before was placed inside it. Also, there was even a desk and a computer. The furnitures were all new as well. She rubbed her eyes thinking that this was a dream, but her books on the desk and her belongings in one corner of the room proved that it was indeed her room.

HeeYoon, who was dumbfoundedly exclaiming about her room became curious about her brother's room. She immediately went to her brother's room.

“...What's this?”

However, HeeYoon was very much disappointed after she opened the door to KangYoon's room she expected so much. There was only a bed and a closet. It paled too much in comparison to her own room. He had always invested in HeeYoon and not in himself – HeeYoon felt stifled when she thought about it.

When she looked around the kitchen, bathroom, and the balcony, they were all new worlds to her. The new house was wide, comfortable, and warm. There were no leaks for cold air to come in. The window she had to cover with a plastic bag due to the cold, and the hot water which only existed by boiling the water with gas, all didn't exist in this place. Even with those, HeeYoon was happy.

Excluding one thing.

‘What's up with oppa's room...’

When HeeYoon opened the door to KangYoon's closet, there were only a few clothes hung here and there. It was due to not being able to look after himself as he invested a lot in HeeYoon. As this was the result, HeeYoon felt her heart ache.

When she looked around the house, and made dinner with the

side dishes inside the refrigerator, KangYoon's home time came soon.

And when she was about to finish preparing dinner, KangYoon arrived at home.

"Oppa."

"I'm back."

KangYoon also seemed awkward at the new house as he looked all over the place. It was despite the fact that he had already cleaned the house with the movers in the morning. It seemed like a little bit of time was needed to adapt.

"I already finished preparing dinner?"

"What's for dinner today?"

"Black soybean noodles. You said that one eats these after moving."

"Good. I'm hungry. Let's eat."

While KangYoon was washing up, HeeYoon placed the dishes on the table. Unlike before, they didn't have to take out heavy mini-tables and only had to deliver the dishes to the table. Everything had become more comfortable.

"Do you like the house?"

"No."

Dinner time.

At KangYoon's question, HeeYoon unhesitantly dropped a bomb.

"What? Why? Where?"

"Your room. It's too small. And there are not many things in it. A man shouldn't be like that. You'll look bland."

"I only sleep here, anyway."

"Then what's up with my room? No, do something about your

room, oppa. What is up with that?”

HeeYoon blurted out everything inside her. The tattered room kept getting in her mind whenever she saw KangYoon.

“Little girl. You’re all grown up now? You’re even worrying about me.”

“I’ll be an adult soon. So do something about your... No, oppa. Shall I decorate your room?”

“How?”

“I’ll buy a duvet and change the blanket cover. Your room’s so dull.”

As HeeYoon was so stubborn, KangYoon had no choice but to hand his card over to her. With the words that she shouldn’t buy anything much as it will be heavy and affect her health. HeeYoon said ok and put the card in her pocket.

“Next time, I will do it with my own money.”

“Wow, you just promised, right?”

“I’ll become someone with as much ability as you and feed you.”

“You’re admirable.”

KangYoon was thankful even if it was just words. In fact, to KangYoon, HeeYoon was a thankful existence just by living. However, she even knew how to say such things... KangYoon could only be thankful.

The two’s happy dinner time flowed like that.

-It’s very easy – the word ‘parting’ – only takes a few seconds –

2nd floor of MG Entertainment, in a dance practice room, the title song for SeasonS was flowing out. KangYoon had called the SeasonS members and was looking at their dance routine.

‘Ha...’

KangYoon ended up seeing all sorts of lights from the SeasonS members when they shook their waist lightly – a part of the dance. It wasn't that they were offbeat. However, KangYoon knew that these kind of elements attracted attention.

“Thanks for your work.”

He had already dropped the formalities with the members of SeasonS. They also called KangYoon ‘oppa’ and started becoming friendly with him.

However, regarding work, KangYoon was cold.

“This is no good.”

“You’re too direct...”

Kang HyeSeon complained. She was the member with the most fluctuation in her emotion. It was an influence from being youngest in both her house and the team. She had a completely different personality compared to her mature outer appearance.

“What should we do? Even if the song goes through an arrangement, it’s still this song.”

Jang HanNa asked worriedly. She looked for a solution, as expected of the oldest. She had a small stature and a cute outer appearance, but she was very responsible.

KangYoon was also worried in his own way. This group seemed like they debuted too early no matter how he looked at them. Even their dance abilities were at a level that was just above the trainees. Their looks were alright, though.

‘Did I know a girl group called SeasonS?’

Even KangYoon didn't know all the singers. Countless singers hit it big, and disappeared. In his memory, there wasn't a group called SeasonS. That meant that they disappeared without making themselves known. Moreover, he had never heard of any of the members here.

In the end, this meant that he had to do everything with his own ability.

‘I think I should change the strategy first.’

A waist-focused dance. These were something that the male populace would like – this was definite. Moreover, the members of SeasonS all had beautiful appearances. KangYoon planned a strategy.

“Do you like clubs?”

“Clubs? Of course, they’re great.”

“Hey!!”

When Moon JiHye replied without batting an eyelid, Jang HanNa was surprised and smashed her back. Moon JiHye complained that it wasn’t anything big, but Jang HanNa suppressed with her age.

“Let’s do a club dance. A sexy one.”

“What?”

Excluding Moon JiHyeo, who said she liked clubs, everyone else’s eyes widened. To think it’s a club... They had never even thought about it. Moreover, this was an event at a department store where all sorts of audience, including elderly and children, would gather.

“We’re not only looking for a reaction in the event venue itself. Isn’t the thing you want a ‘hot issue’ anyway?”

“But won’t we look too cheap if we do a club dance? Besides, the clothes are too indecent too.”

Song HaNeul shook her head as she was worried. Female singers already had short clothing anyway. But to emphasize a club dance, more skin would show and whether it was trousers or skirts, it would get shorter as well. It was obvious that their stage costumes will become indecent. She didn’t like that.

“We’ll go with a club dance as the motif but it’s not completely a

club dance. To explain easily, you can think that we're just getting the motif. It's the same with the clothes. In clubs, there is the objective to seduce the opposite gender, and hence, the clothes will get shorter, but for us, let's not over do it. Let's change the dance routine to fit a club dance. We'll arrange the song to be a little more electronic as well. Of course, the choice is yours."

KangYoon thought that it would work on the populace. The place where the performance is is where people of all ages and gender, gather but the performance was at night – meaning many couples and other young people will gather. If they do a club dance that doesn't look cheap, then they could expect a good reaction. Of course, it was a paper-thin difference, so it won't be easy.

"We understand. We'll do it."

The SeasonS members, who discussed for a long time, eventually decided to do it. They couldn't find a solution with their current dance routine anyway. They judged that it was better to go on an adventure. KangYoon wrote down the confirmed things and went out to request for an arrangement.

"Won't we have to spend a huge amount of money? We don't even have any though."

When KangYoon left, Moon JiHye asked worriedly. She became worried when so many optional products increased after they had bought the main product.

"But doesn't he have the ability? We should believe in him. I heard that he was a rising star nowadays. Sedy following JooAh – He said that he will rise up more in the future."

"Who did?"

"MoonSoo oppa did."

Kang HyeSeon and Song HaNeul conversed worriedly. As they were of the same age, they liked to whisper to each other. Like many other people, they especially liked to talk about other people.

“Let’s first do as we’re told. He’s an expert. We should believe in him.”

“Ok, unni.”

Jang HanNa organized their opinions and the members all agreed. However, they were worried a lot. How much more money would they have to spend, how would the people’s reaction be, and what will become of them after the performance – they had complicated thoughts.

However, those girls realized in less than 1 day. They realized how useless their thoughts are, even when they were ‘thinking about the future’.

Chapter 29: A Stage That Widens Stages (2)

“MinAh~.”

MinAh, who was drinking water in the resting area, twitched when she heard the slow and savory voice calling her.

“Sa...SamSoon.”

“Whatcha doin’? ‘Rinkin’ wa’er?”

“Yeah...haha.”

Jung MinAh laughed awkwardly.

She was fed up with dealing with Lee SamSoon, who was carefree and like a tomboy.

But as her skills were good, she couldn’t say anything and there was nothing that she could pick on in the dorms...

She knew that she was a good friend, but it was uncomfortable to get close to her. She was too different to the people that Jung MinAh knew about.

“Can you give me a cup?”

“...Here.”

Jung MinAh was awkward in a different sense.

However, Lee SamSoon came close to her without any restraint.

Jung MiniAh found such Lee SamSoon very uncomfortable.

‘Just how did a person like her get chosen for the team?!’

This was a question that Jung MinAh had.

A tomboy look with an accent.

Who would like such a girl?

Jung MinAh really didn’t like such a girl.

More than Ailee, who get called by the trainer because she makes

mistakes every day!

Whether she knew or not, Lee SamSoon kept calling out to her friendlily.

“Ya’know? Today’s singing prac’ice, rite?”

“Y, yeah. I, it is.”

“Singin’s so hard. Can MinAh sing well?”

“No, I...I’m no good. JooYeon’s good.”

“Oh, raelly? I should ask JooYeon for help, then.”

After a ‘thanks for the drink’, Lee SamSoon disappeared like an arrow.

Not minding everything else, she was an energetic colleague.

Jung MinAh softly shook her head while looking at Lee SamSoon’s disappearing back.

“Ah, she doesn’t fit with me...”

“Who does?”

“Hiiik!!”

At the sudden man’s voice, Jung MinAh was exaggeratedly shocked.

When she turned back, KangYoon was there.

“Ahjussi!! I was scared!!”

“We’re at the company.”

“Ok, ok. Team Leader. Anyway, I almost felt my heart drop. From when were you there?”

“From when you said that you didn’t fit with SamSoon.”

KangYoon bought some snacks from the shop and sat in front of Jung MinAh.

Dieting was normal for those trainees so they sold a lot of diet

snacks at the shop as well.

The snacks that KangYoon bought were of those kind as well.

“Thank you. But should I really eat something like this?”

“If you don’t want it, then I’ll eat them.”

“...No, it’s alright.”

Hunger was the best spice.

To Jung MinAh, who had to control her diet, these snacks were in truth, a blessing.

To Jung MinAh, who picked up the tofu-snack and soybean milk, KangYoon started asking about the things he was curious about.

“Do you really don’t get along with SamSoon?”

“That is...”

“Did you fight?”

“It’s not that, but...”

Jung MinAh mumbled her words.

Whether to speak her heart or not – She remembered that she got an earful when she said she hated SamSoon last time. Jung MinAh also reflected as she knew that she became a bit too emotional, but she couldn’t adjust to the carefree attitude of Lee SamSoon.

KangYoon spoke first after noticing that Jung MinAh was hesitating.

“You know, MinAh, I want you to learn SamSoon’s leisurely attitude.”

“Leisure? SamSoon has leisure?”

“Don’t you know already? Of course, SamSoon has something to learn from you as well. There was a reason why we didn’t let you girls choose a pair yourselves and did it one sidedly. You will have something to learn from each other.”

“Like what you said, Team Leader, SamSoon has a leisurely attitude. No, she’s overflowing with leisure that she’s too carefree. She does well in practice, but when it’s at the dorms or to her friends... I feel like I’m going crazy. I can’t get used to it.”

“I don’t know how you’re going crazy, but does she inconvenience other people like that?”

“That...”

Jung MinAh couldn’t answer. There wasn’t a case where Lee SamSoon had inconvenienced others. Instead, she had a good relationship with other trainees when they were all competitors. There were cases where some of the tenacious ones also loosened their guard when against Lee SamSoon. There was a difference to Jung MinAh, who the other trainees couldn’t approach easily.

“MinAh, you have tenacity. You simply cannot watch yourself lose. You know this yourself, right?”

“Yes. If I think that I have to win, then I have to win no matter the method. Definitely.”

“That’s an amazing strong point. That’s how you improved yourself. Right?”

“Yes.”

Jung MinAh could say with confidence that she was better in dancing than the other trainees. She was proud that even KangYoon had acknowledged her. However, KangYoon’s words didn’t end there.

“However, it may become a poison that can ruin you.”

“It may become a poison?”

“Overcompetition ruins people. That’s why I want you to learn to control that tenacity of yours from SamSoon. Do you understand?”

Jung MinAh couldn’t completely understand KangYoon’s words. It was because she felt it was unrealistic. However, she first nodded

while saying yes. KangYoon was her mentor already. She thought that if it's his words, then she obviously listen to it. It wouldn't be easy, but she decided to look for points that she may learn from from SamSoon.

Jung MinAh, who separated from KangYoon, returned to the practice room. As the trainer wasn't here yet, the girls were all chatting.

“Bwahaha!! Then did you play around on tigers' backs when you were young?”

“There are no tigers nowadays. Come have a look in the future. I will cook you some nice food with kimchi and all.”

“Me too, me too!! I want to go to that mountain.”

When Jung MInAh had a look, SamSoon was at the center of the conversation. Han JooYeon was quietly listening, and Ailee Jung was saying incoherent stuff while making the mood, and even the youngest, Seo HanYu, showed interest. It seemed like even Christie An, who was expressionless, perked her ears and was listening.

‘So this team's mood maker was SamSoon.’

Being unusual may be a weak point that makes one distant. However it could also be a strong point. Lee SamSoon had the leisure to calmly accept everyone while approaching her colleagues without restraint. She understood just a little why KangYoon said for her to learn the leisurely attitude from SamSoon.

“There, there. Shall we start practice?”

Then, the trainer came in. Everyone went in formation as if they hadn't chatted, and the high-difficulty training started.

In a high-class bar quite a distance away from the company.

Inside the place, where faint violet and orange lightings could be seen and high class jazz music was flowed, KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi met.

“Thank you for your time today, Mr. KangYoon.”

“No, President.”

“You’re not overexerting yourself, right?”

“It’s alright.”

This was an obvious manner as a member of society. Before coming here, KangYoon had to hurry up his work today. Whether she knew or not, President Lee HyunJi poured some alcohol to KangYoon and went into topic.

“Today, I called you for more personal story. I wanted to listen to your opinion, too. People usually won’t talk about trivial stuff, but today, please answer as honestly as possible. I will do so as well.”

“.....”

At President Lee HyunJi, who unusually requested for honesty, KangYoon silently nodded. KangYoon thought that something may be up the moment he was called out here. His ‘what if’ had become ‘as expected’.

“As you know well, Team Leader KangYoon, our company, that is, MG Entertainment is composed of the president and the Board of Directors with the chairman at the top. Whenever there is something important, it needs to go through the approval of all 3 of the Chairman, President, and the Board. You know this, right?”

“Yes.”

“I want to talk about that today. Although it’s uninteresting, but please listen.”

President Lee HyunJi started talking about the company.

Chairman Won JinMoon was executing highest authority at the top within the company. He contributed the most in creating the company from scratch, and he had the most share in stocks. There were 2 factions under the chairman, and one was the Presidential faction while the other was the Board of Directors.

“The Chairman used the President’s faction and the Board well. He had thought that the company would develop further if the two factions compete with each other. His thoughts were right, and the Presidential faction and the board tried to show achievements while hindering the other. That’s how the current MG Entertainment was built.”

However, the problem occurred after the current President, President Lee HyunJi came into her position. As the previous President had to leave the company due to bribery and corruption, the Presidential faction started becoming weaker and the Board became stronger. Moreover, as their foreign relations became bad, the young Lee HyunJi, who studied overseas, came into the position of the President to make up for it.

“In those Directors’ eyes, I was too young. Moreover, the time was bad too. When I was just employed, it was recontract season for those big-name singers. As you know, Mr. KangYoon, the result was a big failure. Thanks to that, my power plummeted, and the power of those Directors shot up. In this situation, I met you, Mr. Lee KangYoon.”

To President Lee HyunJi, KangYoon’s existence was like a savior. Chairman Won JinMoon place KangYoon under President Lee HyunJi, and later, KangYoon started bringing out huge achievements. With JooAh’s debut into Japan as the beginning, the concert team was made, and its first work with Sedy’s comeback stage was successful, and following that, they were also expecting good effects from the work with SeasonS as well, and the concert team was showing the possibility for growth and lastly, the girl group project was progressing smoothly as well. Thanks to that, power started gathering under President Lee HyunJi.

“First, I want to apologize that you’ve been thrown into intra-company politics. However, the Directors all see you as mine. To them, you’re an enemy they have to defeat. Your success is my success and my success is like poison to them.”

“.....”

“You aren’t going to say something like ‘Aren’t we all in the same company?’ and the like, right? I want to protect you, Mr KangYoon. Be mine. Let us go together for a long time.”

KangYoon quietly closed his eyes. He thought up of many things. Even the thought that there’s no way an achievement for the company will inconvenience them, as they were directors and the thought that he want to escape from all this. Various thoughts passed by in his head.

‘In the end, this moment comes.’

However, KangYoon eventually straightened his thoughts. It wasn’t like he hadn’t thought of intra-company politics while he was doing a big project. Of course, it was definitely not that he wanted to jump into it. He thought that impurities will start pouring into him. He had already thought that something like this may happen as he received a high salary and his responsibility became bigger. Everything had its consequences. He didn’t live his 10 years in his ‘past life’ for nothing.

However, KangYoon didn’t want to be dragged around. His standards were in some other place.

“First, thank you for thinking about me. President.”

“.....”

“What I can definitely tell you is that I’m no one’s person, and just Lee KangYoon. The current Planning and Management Team Leader and at the same time, Concert Planning Team Leader at MG Entertainment. This is me at MG Entertainment. I’m nobody’s person so there’s nothing like that.”

KangYoon’s eyes looked strong. This looked like his declaration to not be dragged around by anyone at the same time of being a rejection. There was no way that he would look good to people like President Lee HyunJi.

“Is that so? That’s a pity. I’ll take it that you’re going to the other side.”

President Lee HyunJi laughed bitterly. Currently, she was walking on thin ice. To her, who was desperate, KangYoon was disappointment itself. However, KangYoon’s words hadn’t ended yet.

“My standards are simple. To make a singer do music. Isn’t MG Entertainment there to let the singers sing, and for those fans who listen to those songs?”

“.....”

“If someone meets this criteria, then I’ll join that person whoever this person may be. This is all I can say to you.”

KangYoon didn’t say anymore. He drank the alcohol in the glass in one shot. A bitter feeling welled up in him, but he waited for President Lee HyunJi’s next words as if nothing had happened. This meant that ‘my standards are like this so you follow me’, or so it seemed.

Eventually, President Lee HyunJi calmly opened her mouth.

“...To make a singer do music. Quite simple.”

“That is so.”

“A singer, do music...? Music, you’re saying music.”

“Standards should be simple.”

“Hahahaha!!”

President Lee HyunJi bursted out laughing. KangYoon didn’t submit to her at all. However, his words were refreshing.

“Good, it’s good. Then if I make singers do music, then Mr. KangYoon will be on my side? This is what you mean, isn’t it?”

KangYoon smiled silently. He meant agreement. President Lee HyunJi, who understood that intention, laughed even more loudly

and poured out some alcohol for KangYoon.

“Hahaha!! I was done in today. I was trying to lure you into my side, and I was done in instead. Mr. KangYoon. You’re a scary person. Here, receive one from me.”

“Thank you.”

Principles and standards. KangYoon had clear principles and standards. President Lee HyunJi could understand about Lee KangYoon clearly today.

‘He’s a man of great caliber. He isn’t someone who’ll stay here forever.’

President Lee HyunJi judged like that after hanging out with KangYoon. He wasn’t someone that just did work well. She could think about a lot of things from his words.

Make a singer do music.

In the end, truth was simple. If singers did music, then they’ll produce profit, then the company will run smoothly, then more people will rejoice, and the company will grow more. It was oversimplification, but KangYoon talked about the ideals which was the most important thing.

She thought about intra-company politics, but KangYoon had seen through the most important thing.

In the end, President Lee HyunJi decided to go together with him for a long time, not as her subordinate, but as her colleague.

“Receive one from me.”

“You’re giving me too much...”

“Shut up. Just receive one from me.”

Amongst the amiable(?) atmosphere, the two’s drinking session lasted all night.

Dawn.

In a bar where most people have already left.

President Lee HyunJi was grandly drunk and was lying face down, and KangYoon was quietly tilting his glass alone.

“I have to leave MG Entertainment and do my own work someday... but there are too many homeworks.”

The day he creates a stage not under the flag of MG Entertainment, but under his name.

KangYoon imagined the scene where a singer was shouting and the audience was cheering in such a stage.

When alcohol entered him, such thoughts stirred up his mind.

“It’s too far away right now. I need to do something about HeeYoon’s condition as well, and my footing is weak too...”

However, KangYoon smiled bitterly while stirring the pumpkin-colored glass.

As of yet, it was too far of a dream. His footing and experience were all insufficient, and his circumstances weren’t good either.

“Even so, definitely...”

While thinking about the future, which was still far away, KangYoon’s eyes shined.

While thinking about the dream which will definitely come true.

He was embracing a truly huge exhaustion, but KangYoon’s commute wasn’t different than any other day.

KangYoon left for outside work after finishing the meeting with the concert team and the girl group-related work. It was to meet with the composer for an arrangement. If it was MG Entertainment, they could make the composer himself come, but KangYoon preferred going directly. It was because he could see the work environment and see through the characteristics of the person as well. KangYoon was a utilitarianist and cared less about

face.

‘So today’s underground, eh? Is this traces of charcoal briquet?’

KangYoon went downstairs where it was written ‘Happy Man’ in a small sign. The one which caught his eyes more was traces of burns rather than the sign. The building was messy, but fortunately there was a doorbell. After he pressed the doorbell, a man wearing a tank top peeked his head out from the door.

“Who is it?”

“Hello. I’m called Lee KangYoon. I came here for the song request.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, but please wait a moment...”

The man wearing the tank top seemed embarrassed as he closed the door and went back inside. A moment later, A man wearing a leather jacket and a strange hat with a skull opened the door again.

“I’m sorry. Please come in.”

KangYoon went inside. Inside, there was a small studio facility and DJ equipments, other than that, there were audios and the like. The building didn’t seem that good as the ceiling was low. For a studio, this wasn’t such a good environment. KangYoon looked around the place for a moment before sitting down.

“Hello. I’m YHB. I’m sorry for before. I accidentally fell asleep...”

“Not at all. Is the song going well?”

“It’s about half-done. Would you like to have a listen?”

YHB started controlling the machine. Soon, the song, which was in the middle of an arrangement, started flowing out. The song flowed in a similar beat to the original in the first verse but when it came to the 2nd verse, the atmosphere changed clearly and the song flowed in a club beat. However, it stopped in the middle of the second verse as it wasn’t finished yet.

“I want it to be more rich. Put in a DJ effect. It will be difficult to

use the actual machine so please arrange it inside.”

“I understand, that’s a pity.”

YHB showed his disappointment as though it was his desire as a composer. The song request which came after a long time was so much fun. The fancy electric beat made the body shake automatically. KangYoon moved his shoulders up and down while going into the beat. There wasn’t anything that he needed to point out. KangYoon was satisfied.

After having listened to the song, KangYoon stood up.

“Then I’ll believe you and go.”

“Do you have anything else you need?”

Unlike the peculiar clothing, YHB was a considerate man.

“You can decide on it. I’ll just believe in you.”

“.....”

KangYoon didn’t say anything else. YHB asked as if this was out of his expectations.

“It’s not like I’ve received a lot of requests, but you say something different to those other people.”

“Sorry?”

“People who leave their songs with me have a lot of requests. It happens a lot because I’m a newbie, but... ‘Do this, do that’ – there were many such requests. I was all tensed up since I heard you were from MG Entertainment... But, I understand. I will show you a result that you will definitely be satisfied with.”

“Then I’ll believe in you and leave.”

KangYoon left via the stairs where traces of charcoal could be seen. He fell into thought while leaving the building which its traces of charcoal left a deep impression in him.

‘YHB, in other words, Yu HeungBoo, will position himself as the

master of electronic music soon. It's not time yet, but his skills are already there. There's not much to talk about.'

KangYoon was satisfied with his results and got on the bus to go back to his office. However, at that moment, his phone started vibrating loudly.

"It's Lee KangYoon."

-Hello, I'm Moon JiHan from SunDae Rentals.

"Hello, President. What is it?"

-I called you for the renting of the lighting. The order form should have come in by today, but as it's still not here, I've contacted you. I've called the Stage Production team, but they said that they didn't know so I called you directly.

"I passed the notices around yesterday... Since the concept of the singing is not decided yet, I think it will be difficult to order by today. I will contact you tomorrow. I will make sure that something like this doesn't happen again. I'm sorry."

"Yes. I get it. Please call us tomorrow."

KangYoon said he would order tomorrow and requested understanding. He had even notified the planning team to call the company. However, to think that they made them call him... KangYoon could only sigh.

"Don't worry. Then I'll see you later."

After ending the call, KangYoon hurried to the company. As soon as he arrived, KangYoon headed to the Stage Production Team office.

"You didn't check the notice?"

"I'm sorry. I think it's because there was an error with the intranet yesterday."

"Sheesh."

KangYoon let it go after he had heard the Head of the Stage Production Team's embarrassing words. He had said that there were cases where messages didn't get sent due to an error in the intranet, and that this was the first case a notice was like that. After telling the Head of the Stage Production Team to intimidate the Data Processing Team to make sure this doesn't happen again, he left the Stage Production Team.

When he came back to his office, paper friends which had 'Please approve' at the top were piled up like a mountain on his desk.

'There's a lot today too...'

He sighed automatically, but after slapping his face a few times, he started working while attacking all those piled-up paperwork.

Chapter 30: A Stage That Widens Stages (3)

A completely different sound was coming from the 2nd floor practice room where SeasonS members were practicing. Electric sounds which made one's shoulders move up and down was filling the practice room.

“This is our song? It's completely my style?!”

Song HaNeul was moving her shoulders up and down when she got even more excited and started waving her hand. The exciting electric sounds had the power to shake one's body.

“The song's mood is completely changed. It's entirely different from the original.”

Jang HanNa looked worried. Her worry stemmed from the fact that she didn't have much contact with electric sounds. Moon JiHye seemed to think that it wasn't so bad, and Kang HyeSeon was already shaking her body along with Song HaNeul.

“That's the end.”

KangYoon stopped the members who were enjoying the music in a variety of ways. All gazes gathered on KangYoon.

“It's this kind of feeling. How is it?”

“It's good!!”

It was from Song HaNeul, who was always straightforward. She seemed to have taken a liking to it as she still couldn't let go of the excitement. In contrast, Jang HanNa seemed to hesitate as she was worried.

“I think it's a bit too 'shocking'. A club song in a department store stage, isn't it too risky?”

Of course, there was the fact that she didn't like the genre itself as well. However, considering the unspecified audience, it wasn't just an excuse. Clubs are a culture that's enjoyed by people in their

20s and there were many people who would find it uncomfortable once they reach their 40s.

“Unni, why are you like that? I like it, though.”

“HaNeul, it’s not something to think so positively about.”

“Unni, we’re leaving everything to him anyway. What are you so worried about? It will go well for sure.”

Song HaNeul was already going towards KangYoon-worshipping as she was already seduced by the electric sounds. Jang HanNa tried to speak something but she held it down. She planned to slap her back after KangYoon left.

While everyone was talking to themselves about the song, KangYoon once again gathered attention onto himself.

“I did bring the song, but the choice is yours. I said before, but I won’t force you anything. If you go with the original, there’s an advantage that you can appeal to your already existing fans while the current song has the advantage that there will be a ‘shock’ and will become a hot topic. If there’s a disadvantage, it’s that there are insufficient fans for you to appeal to, and that a ‘shock’ always brings risks.”

Now was the time to decide. Today, he had to hand over the list of rental equipment over to the rental company, so that they can prepare and adjust to the schedule. It was difficult to drag out anymore.

While KangYoon was waiting for their choice, the SeasonS members seemed to have decided as Jang HanNa spoke as their representative.

“We’ll go with the arranged version.”

“Good. Then I’ll think up of the necessary equipments and the concepts. You should think up of a dance routine that fits a club concept to replace the original dance routine as well.”

“JiHye, do you think you can think up of a club dance routine?”

At Jang HanNa’s question, Moon JiHye replied.

“I will try. Let’s do it right away.”

“Okay!! Well, then, let’s practice!!”

When the SeasonS members got into formation to practice, KangYoon quietly left and went downstairs to the office. It was to talk about the details regarding the concert with President Yoon MoonSoo.

“This is the stage of Yen Department Store.”

KangYoon spread out the stage sketch, concept, and various other photographs on the table. President Yoon MoonSoo looked at each of the documents and the photos over one by one.

“The stage is not big. You can consider that there’s enough space for 5 people to dance at once. 1 monitor and 1 speaker, other than that, there’s no other equipments for singers. The equipments we’re setting up by ourselves are psychedelic lights, laser beams, and a fog machine. There are no other equipments.”

“It’s less than I thought.”

“There’s no budget.”

“.....”

At KangYoon’s straight ball, President Yoon MoonSoo became silent, money was always the enemy.

“As it’s winter, the sun will set early. I have set our stage as the 3rd from the back. It will change according to the day’s circumstances, but if there’s anything, we might be moved back, but there won’t be a case where we’ll be moved forward. The core of the performance this time is the production of a club-like atmosphere using the psychedelic lights, the laser beams and the fog machine.”

“But wouldn’t the lights be too bright? It’s next to the

department stores.”

“It doesn’t matter. Instead, it’s better to make it look less like a club. We’re going for a club atmosphere, not a real club.”

“Aha.”

President Yoon MoonSoo seemed to have understood KangYoon’s words as he tapped his knees. At the essence, it was TV stage. Club elements are literally just spices. Spices make something taste better – meaning, it’s no way, the essence.

“The lasers and the psychedelic lights will be 7 to 12 seconds at best. As you said, this will happen in a department store. If you turn those lights on for so long, then eyes will start hurting. We’ll use them momentarily to attract attention, and gather audience, no matter how small.”

“.....”

President Yoon MoonSoo exclaimed. If it really went as KangYoon said, then he thought that they will produce a hot topic on top of it being a good stage. It was just an event stage but to think that its uses expanded to this... He was the one to mention it at the beginning, but he had no idea that it can really become true.

After talking, KangYoon left the office. While leaving the tattered building, KangYoon pondered about the stage.

‘The important thing is the degree of completion of the dance routine. I should check tomorrow.’

While writing down various things about the stage, KangYoon headed home.

Next day.

Inside the practice room of Dumaz Entertainment, the SeasonS members were sweating beads of sweat. A faster beat than before, and the 30 seconds increase made all of them nervous while dancing.

‘This... is really no joke, isn’t it?’

KangYoon was really surprised while looking at the SeasonS members practicing. It was because the white light coming out from the members was very strong. Of course, as they hadn’t practiced enough, the lights from the members didn’t harmonize with each other’s yet. However, KangYoon could be sure after looking at those lights. That the song was very compatible with the SeasonS members.

“Let’s try the original song too.”

KangYoon ordered for the original song just in case. From the members, who were dancing to the slower beat, KangYoon could see grey lights.

‘As expected, the answer laid in arrangement.’

It wasn’t that the song was bad. However, it had a bad affinity with the SeasonS members. It was like a girl in puberty wearing clothes that did not fit her. The SeasonS members could also see that although the arranged version was more difficult, it had more degree of completion in regards to the dance routine, and was better in regards to the song itself.

After the comparison of the original and the arrangement was done, KangYoon gathered the SeasonS members.

“Now, we’re finished preparing. I have talked to your President about the details of the stage.”

“Yes.”

“Questions?”

At KangYoon’s question, Kang HyeSeon raised her hand.

“How is the costume? Is it risqué?”

“There won’t be a risk. People hate it if you show too much.”

“The president said that we need to take more off to attract attention...”

When Kang HyeSeon muttered, KangYoon shook his head.

“If you take more off once, then it’s harder to put it on again. People always want more stimulation. You need to show off moderately. You’re going to have a showdown using your dance. The song this time is good so it’s doable. The equipments will also support you well so you don’t have to worry.”

“Yes.”

Kang HyeSeon accepted and nodded her head. As she didn’t like showing off too much, she seemed relaxed after she heard that she wouldn’t show too much. The next question came from Moon JiHye.

“By what time do we need to arrive there?”

“The stage will start at 6:30. The technical rehearsal will start at 3 so arrive there before then.”

“It’s the weekend so we need to see the time well.”

She kept in mind what should have been kept in mind by managers. Those girls all double acted as managers and coordinators.

KangYoon received a few more questions about the stage and explained them. He emphasized a lot the fact that they had to take care of their safety as it was a small stage, and the fact that they should not panic when meeting the gazes of the audience as the distance between the stage and the audience was small.

After the conversation was over, KangYoon left the practice room and went downstairs. Now, he was at a stage where he should meet President Yoon MoonSoo and finish their business. When he arrived at the office, President Yoon MoonSoo was waiting with the required documents.

“Please sit here.”

President Yoon MoonSoo was very humble when confronting

KangYoon. It wasn't just because he was from a big company. The figure of KangYoon doing work, and the change in attitude of the SeasonS members all enabled him to judge that KangYoon had the skills.

The things related to transaction and the budget was already approved and signed. The documents left now were about equipment rentals and the costumes. KangYoon briefly went over the work with President Yoon MoonSoo and stood up.

“Thank you for your work, President.”

“Thank you for your work, Team Leader Lee. Now, we'll meet at the rehearsal, then.”

KangYoon thought for a bit. The stage will occur in Daejeon. (T/N: Seoul and Daejeon are two different cities, they are about 160km apart). Does he really have to go all the way to Daejeon? In a budget point of view, it was a loss. There was no need for him in a small stage like that. When he organized his thoughts, KangYoon shook his head.

“I apologize. I think I should work on something else that day.”

“Is that so...”

“I will make up the best team of staffs. The settings are all done so you don't have to worry about it. You just have to do whatever you want as prepared.”

President Yoon MoonSoo showed his disappointment. However, it was rude for him to request KangYoon to come all the way to Daejeon. KangYoon had already worked more than he had asked for.

“I understand. The work you did until now, I really thank you for it.”

“There'll be good results.”

After a handshake with President Yoon MoonSoo, KangYoon left

Dumaz Entertainment.

‘So what’s left is the results. I hope it goes well.’

While looking back at the tattered 2 storey building, Kangyoon wished for the best from the bottom of his heart.

Rooftop.

The warm winds of spring starting to blow after the chilly winds of winter made people gather on the rooftop. Starting with the employees having a smoke to relieve their fatigue and trainees who secretly came up to rest, and even the singers – the rooftop was always a place of rest for the people of MG Entertainment.

“Haa...”

Among them was Min JInSeo. While looking down at a building from a corner of a rooftop, she was in deep thought.

[Singer Preparation Class Transference Notice]

While looking at the paper in her hands, Min JinSeo couldn’t erase the worry from her face. She should have been happy that she was promoted to the preparation class from the practice class, but her face didn’t look like that at all. It was because she was moved from the Acting Practice Class to the Singer Preparation Class. Her major literally changed.

‘What do I do about this? Should I apply to put me down?’

Min JinSeo crumpled the paper. It was a one-sided notice from the company. MG Entertainment was well-known for its strict rules. She couldn’t even imagine to go against those rules. If she did, then it will bring a huge amount of obstacles in her activities later. Celebrities will die out and even be expelled from the company. MG Entertainment was such a scary place.

“Haa...”

The more she thought about it, the longer her sighs became. Min JinSeo thought about it a lot, but she couldn’t come up with an

answer. When she looked to her side, the singer-seonbaes were all smoking in a cool pose. Like they were scattering their worries along with the smoke, she also wanted to scatter her worries.

“Should I smoke too...”

“Don’t. Don’t learn things like that.”

“Kyak!”

Someone interrupted while Min JinSeo was muttering alone. When she looked to the side due to the surprise, it was KangYoon.

“T... Team Leader.”

“You look... complicated. Is there anything?”

“Oh, it’s...”

Min JinSeo started talking with a long sigh. It was the talk about the transfer to the Singer Preparation Class from the Acting Practice Class.

‘So this is the reason why she left.’

KangYoon knew why she left MG Entertainment to go to a small entertainment company in his ‘past life’ after he heard from her. Of course, after she moved, her talent as an actress exploded out and she became a huge star.

After listening to Min JinSeo’s story, KangYoon’s expression became serious.

‘What do I do about it?’

There was no meaning to Min JinSeo if she’s not an actress. KangYoon knew that too well. However, the company wanted her to prepare as a singer. Min JinSeo was definitely eye-catching. She was tall, her body figure was good, and her innate voice was good as well so he could see why they wanted her to be a singer. Eye-catching can be considered having a good ‘star quality’. However, KangYoon knew well that she herself didn’t want to be a singer.

After deciding his thoughts, KangYoon calmly started speaking.

Chapter 31: A Stage That Widens Stages (4)

“So, you are determined.”

“...In fact... Yes.”

There was no hesitation in Min JinSeo’s answer.

Acting.

As she had decided, there was no tremble in her eyes.

KangYoon, who understood her will, calmly spoke.

“To say it coldly, this maybe an opportunity for you. There isn’t a precedent where our company had succeeded with an actor or an actress but, we have plenty of know-hows regarding singers. Perhaps it might be better to debut as a singer rather than an unsure actress.”

“...I know that.”

Min JinSeo was trembling slightly.

She knew well of KangYoon’s intentions while speaking those words. ‘How about debuting as a singer first then shifting to acting?’ – was what he meant.

However, Min JinSeo was firm with her decision.

“... I don’t have any talent in singing. It’s not interesting either. It’s very difficult for a an actor or an actress to escape the bias of the people if he or she had shifted after being a singer, no matter what they do. I want to walk the path of an actress properly from the beginning. The more I practice, the more I find fun in acting. I don’t want to go back just because it’s difficult.”

Min JinSeo continued while putting power into her voice.

“After talking with you, I set on my path. I will become an actress. I practiced harder from that time onwards. I want to debut as an actress and grow as an actress.”

Perhaps it was a high-class worry.

However, KangYoon knew that her worries were serious.

Getting your dreams snapped because of being pushed around by others was a tragic thing.

‘What should I do?’

KangYoon fell into thought.

The Min JinSeo he knew had high chances of becoming successful.

She was a top-tier actress in KangYoon’s ‘past’.

‘If Min JinSeo left the company, then she might be able to spread out her dreams. The ‘past’ Min JinSeo was running on a path of success, and even after that she als... No, wait.”

KangYoon thought about Diros Entertainment where Min JinSeo went to in his ‘past’.

‘There were a few strange rumors surrounding Diros Entertainment. Starting with rumors that she had a slave contract with them and the rumor that she had to do ‘service’... there were a lot of rumors. The truth of the situation wasn’t revealed but it continued. In the end, it didn’t even make it to the media, but the noise kept continuing even as Min JinSeo’s success continued.’

If Min JinSeo went to Diros Entertainment for acting, will she have been happy?

KangYoon’s conclusion arrived here.

The fact that there was noise meant that there was a reason for it.

Diros Entertainment was a small company. Such a small entertainment company had achieved success with an actress in a short period of time.

Will it really have gone through the normal process?

‘I’m not sure, but they should have used a lot of bad methods.’

KangYoon organized his thoughts.

Will Min JinSeo really be happy if she went to Diros Entertainment?

Will she have a good environment to spread out her wings?

The conclusion was no.

For a better result, KangYoon began talking.

“Did some other entertainment company contact you?”

“.....”

Min JinSeo twitched as if she was poked where it hurt. She was bad at concealing things. KangYoon knew that he was right and he grabbed his head.

“As expected.”

“It... was from a small... place.”

Min JinSeo shut her mouth after speaking vaguely.

However, when she met her eyes with KangYoon’s again, she started speaking carefully while looking down towards the ground.

“...Unlike the current company, they said that they will let me focus solely on acting. They also said that they will help me debut soon too...”

To Min JinSeo, it was a very seductive condition.

An acting class on top of debut... There was nothing to compare with MG.

“By chance, is that company called, Diros Entertainment?”

“...Yes.”

At KangYoon’s pinpoint attack, Min JinSeo was really surprised.

It was to the point that she even thought that KangYoon knew everything.

This was something she had never talked about to any of the members in this company.

Min JinSeo became frightened as she didn't know how KangYoon would react.

However, unlike her thoughts, KangYoon's reaction was soft.

"What are you planning to do from now on?"

"I... don't know yet."

"If, you can continue acting here, will you remain here?"

"Sorry?"

Min JinSeo wondered what kind of thing KangYoon was talking about. Question colored her face.

"I think that you will definitely succeed if you become an actress. To be honest, I'm thinking that I shouldn't let you go."

"...Why?"

"I shouldn't let go of an actress who will achieve success for sure, right?"

It was the same as last time. KangYoon kept speaking good words to Min JinSeo.

She didn't hate those words, but it was difficult to believe in them. In Min JinSeo's eyes, there was doubt.

"You also said last time that I will definitely succeed. I really thank you. You made me able to walk my path. However, we didn't even meet each other that many times. To you, I may just be one trainee out of countless of them... can you really say that easily that I will succeed? Aren't you just saying that because you don't want to let go of a trainee?"

As Min JinSeo was desperate, her reactions were extreme as well.

He could have said that she was rude, but KangYoon received her desperation head on.

“Should I show you an evidence?”

“.....”

“You just said that you were one of countless trainees, right?”

“.....”

“I will show you that you aren’t. As proof, I will solve your anxiety within this week. Instead, please delay your decisions for transferring to another company.”

“Sorry?”

Min JinSeo couldn’t understand what KangYoon was saying.

Solve her anxiety? She didn’t know what that meant.

KangYoon seemed to have read that as he repeated his words clearly.

“I will make you able to focus solely on acting in the future.”

KangYoon’s figure in the sunlight was very bright.

She was thankful with just those words. Who, in this company, ever put effort for her like this? Min JinSeo was very thankful just with that.

However, she suppressed her emotions and replied.

“...I understand.”

She tried her best to shake her head and erased her strange fantasy.

KangYoon, who made a promise with Min JinSeo, went back to his office after saying that resting time was over.

While looking at KangYoon’s wide back while he was going down the stairs, Min JinSeo quietly muttered.

“This week... Yes, if it’s just one week...”

Min JinSeo sighed while placing her arms on the hand bar.

The day of SeasonS's performance.

KangYoon finished his breakfast before going to work, and was changing his clothes.

"Oppa, you got a call."

KangYoon was changing when HeeYoon came with his phone which was lying in the living room somewhere. KangYoon put down the tie he was going to wear and accepted the call.

"I received the call. Chief Han, Yes.. what? Son's traffic accident?"

KangYoon's voice became a pitch higher. The employee who was suppose to go couldn't go now due to his son's traffic accident.

"...I understand. I will go myself. Please look after the child. Yes."

When seriousness filled KangYoon's face after he ended the call, Hee Yoon, who was tying KangYoon's tie for him, asked.

"Oppa, what is it? Was there an accident?"

"The employee who's suppose to go to Daejeon can't go. His son got caught up in a traffic accident."

"Really? Then what will happen?"

"I think I need to go. And here, I planned to come back early and go with you to the hospital..."

KangYoon became sorry and he avoided HeeYoon's gaze. It was the day of the performance, but as he judged that there was nothing he should worry about. However, now, his schedule was all screwed up.

However, HeeYoon warmly smiled as if trying to console KangYoon.

"It's alright. I heard you saying that they want you there anyway. It's good."

“If this continues, then I’ll have to keep doing that. I can’t differentiate whether I’m doing work as a planner or a consultant...”

“So what? If you have the skills, then you do both. Here you go, that’s done.”

HeeYoon splendidly tied KangYoon’s neck tie. The purple necktie went well with the white shirt.

“My oppa’s so cool.”

“Of course, your oppa’s the coolest. Then I’ll go. Don’t forget to go to the hospital.”

“I know.”

After receiving HeeYoon’s bidding, KangYoon headed towards the company. As he head to take over chief Han’s work and go to Daejeon, he had to hurry. Of course, everything was something that he had instructed so it didn’t take long.

KangYoon went to Seoul Station after preparing fast at the office. As he took the KTX(T/N: Korean Express Train, i.e. Bullet Train), it didn’t take long for him to arrive at Daejeon.

‘It’s here.’

When KangYoon had arrived, the technical rehearsal was already underway. KangYoon immediately handed the lightings memory to the lightings director and conversed with him for a bit. The lightings director marveled at the fact that KangYoon had brought something like a lightings memory in a small event like this while saying that it was unheard of. When he said that he would try his best even though he had come here with an easy mind, KangYoon said please and held out a packet of cigarettes. It was, in a sense, a bribe.

KangYoon looked for the SeasonS members who were in the middle of practice after having borrowed a spare area.

“Huh? Hello.”

When KangYoon arrived even when he said he wouldn't, everyone greeted him delightedly. Their morale rose sharply as if they just gained unexpected support. KangYoon gave out bottles of water he had bought and the girls gathered like bees to honey. As they had already practiced a lot after arriving, they had all emptied the bottle by half at once.

“To think that the Team Leader would come himself, I'm surprised.”

When President Yoon MoonSoo spoke with both delight and a tinge of chilliness, KangYoon could only shrug his shoulders. There was no need to talk about the circumstances on his side.

“Oppa, we really practiced hard.”

Song HaNeul, who drank more than half of the bottle at once, boasted. No, it wasn't just her.

“We practiced until late last night. We're confident now.”

Kang HyeSeon also joined in. Everyone seemed to agree as they nodded when KangYoon nodded his head in understanding.

“I look forward to the rehearsal.”

“Yes!!”

After the technical rehearsal is done, it will go onto the pre-rehearsal.

When the SeasonS members were on the stage to dance a little and to confirm their line of sight, Jang HanNa expressed her complaint towards the monitor speaker which protruded out in the middle of the stage.

“This is a bit of a bother.”

“But without this, you won't be able to listen to the song.”

The sound effects engineer replied worriedly. SeasonS didn't

have individual ear-microphones. In the end, if there was no monitor speaker, then they had to listen to the song with the main speaker. It wasn't easy to listen to the song on the stage through the main speaker. It was because the song will be too small. At that moment, KangYoon who was at the front of the stage, stepped in.

“We’re going with an AR(Music Recording + Voice) So let’s do without the monitor speaker.”

“But if we don’t listen to the song, then we might miss a beat.”

Moon JiHye asked worriedly. If one missed a beat, then the entire dance would crumble. It was a small stage, but today’s stage was very important to them. So, a tiny mistake would put them in a difficult position.

“The stage is small here. So, even without the monitor speaker, you would be able to listen to the song. Even if people gather, it’s an outdoor stage and looking at the position of the main speakers, you can listen to the songs from them too. The main speaker is not at the front but up above.”

If the main speaker was at the front, then the sound will only spread out towards the audience so for the singers on the stage, monitor speakers were a must. However, if the main speaker was above or at the sides, then the sounds will flow into the stage as well. It didn’t happen a lot in big concerts, but in small concerts, it happened frequently.

KangYoon requested the sound effects engineer to remove the monitor speaker, and they rehearsed again. Then, although it was smaller than before, they could hear the song well.

“Is it alright?”

At the sound effects director’s words, the SeasonS members made a circle with their fingers. An OK sign.

They all did a thumbs up towards KangYoon while coming down from the stage. As they had little experience regarding stages,

KangYoon's help in this regard was very good.

“He's a hundred times better than our President.”

At Song HaNeul's direct words, Kang HyeSeon agreed. Jang HanNa didn't say anything but she did agree while nodding. And...

“Should we just make him our President?”

Moon HyeSeon refreshingly struck the finisher. Only KangYoon, who didn't know what kind of conversation went on between those words, held onto the rope of nervousness while looking at other singers' stages.

Yen Department Store Opening Celebratory Concert.

As it was a department store opening event, there were a lot of people. There were a lot of singers as well, both famous ones and not famous ones. So when famous singers went on stage, people gathered but when non famous singers went on stage, there was an extremely small amount of reaction from the people.

KangYoon marveled at such an extreme difference in reaction. In an 'event' the people's reactions were mostly cold.

“Thank you.”

Clap clap clap.

When a non famous male singer finished his stage, people lightly clapped. After his stage was over, the MC went forward. He was a comedian who often showed up in TV shows.

“It's a new singer this time as well.”

At those words, the people's reactions weren't that good. KangYoon shivered at the people who were trying to stand up while saying it wasn't interesting. It didn't even start but their turn in the order of sequence wasn't good. It was because the order of arrival of the singers were all twisted.

“I introduce to you. A new group, SeasonS!”

The people greeted them with an applause. However, it was just an applause in form.

‘Unni, I’m scared.’

Kang HyeSeon seemed to be scared of the sunken gazes of the people as she kept trying to look towards Jang HanNa. However, at that moment, she met her eyes with KangYoon’s who was in the middle of the audience, next to the sound effects engineer. KangYoon was signaling her.

‘It’s alright. Be calm.’

Kang HyeSeon, who received KangYoon’s signal, shivered for a brief moment before calming herself down. Now was the time to open the lid. She knew that if she was nervous now, then it might not do any good for her. It was rude to everyone including KangYoon, who prepared a lot. Time passed and the people talked to each other, but KangYoon was relaxing them by signaling it was okay. The girls all took deep breaths and calmed down.

After he saw that they all calmed down, KangYoon signaled the engineers. The start signal.

“Huh? What’s that?”

All lights went off, and the green lasers started beautifully decorating the stage. With a surprise from the audience, the mood reversed instantly. The people who didn’t have much of a reaction until now, started turning their gazes towards SeasonS, who they thought was just side mobs, after they reacted to the big stimulation.

Chapter 32: A Stage That Widens Stages (5)

‘This is it.’

Seeing the audience being attracted by the green lights and the psychedelic lights, KangYoon clenched his fists. He was looking at the atmosphere in the past stages. Ballads and dances – although there were several different singers today, this kind of atmosphere wasn’t here before. While the people’s curiosity, rejection, positive reactions, etc. were intertwining with each other, the SeasonS members’ dance started.

As KangYoon had ordered, the costume wasn’t that revealing, nor was it tight fitting. The costume didn’t show the navel, but it was short, so it didn’t attract that much rejection.

‘The costume is good for sure.’

The club styled costume also played a role in catching the gazes of the people. The male audience was already completely mesmerized and the female audience too, they had different reactions – from those who said they were pretty to those who poked their boyfriends’ sides in jealousy. The passerbys were also gathering one by one.

-My heart still flutters — I get nervous — if I just see you —

The song was already completely different from the original. The white light seen by KangYoon became stronger. The fast electronic beat made people move their shoulders up and down, and the SeasonS members on stage were attracting gazes with pretty but seductive movements.

-It’s very easy – the word farewell – it doesn’t take long –

“Wow–”

Finally, the climax dance routine of SeasonS came out. Unlike shaking their waist from side to side until now, they waved their entire bodies by moving their bodies to the side. It was a move that

emphasized their waistlines. When the lighting burst out on top of the clear cut dance, a huge cheer erupted from the audience.

“Wah-!!”

The cheers from the men were very big. There were some of them who were pinched on their side from time to time. However, even the female audience focused their gazes while saying it was cool, and more and more audience was gathering.

‘Phew...’

KangYoon heaved a sigh of relief while looking at the white light exuding from SeasonS and the positive reactions of the audience.

As the SeasonS stage was reaching its climax, the cheers from the audience became bigger and when the performance was about to end, the sound from the audience had become a big wave.

“Thank you!!”

Behind the stage, KangYoon had received a big thank you from SeasonS.

“It isn’t over yet. Shh.”

When KangYoon gave a warning, as the last singer still had a stage, Kang HyeSeon finally smacked her head lightly. Even so, her eyes looking at KangYoon were glittering.

“Oppa!! Thank you so much. A stage like today, it was the first time in my life. It’s all thanks to you.”

Moon JiHye also seemed like she wouldn’t be able to forget about today. As they were knew, they didn’t have much stage experience, but such a touching stage like today’s was a first. Although it was a small stage, it was the first time they received such a cheer from the audience. Moreover, such a stage where a non-existent reaction became bigger and bigger was something that they will perhaps never experience again. They still couldn’t forget about the time where they received people’s cheers and applause when they were

exiting.

“I... wondered if this would work at the beginning. Even so, I just followed you as we already agreed that we will do as you say. But I never knew it will work to this extent. Thank you.”

Jang HanNa wasn't that different. She was the one who hesitated as she didn't like the club-themed dance. However, her hands were trembling even now as she couldn't forget about the stage.

Song HaNeul also spoke, not losing to others.

“Oppa, oppa. Thank you so much. I won't ever forget about today's stage. Today's stage was really...”

“Oh? HaNeul's crying.”

“I'm not!!”

Song HaNeul even cried due to being touched and Kang HyeSeon consoled her. The two youngest girls eventually went away on their own and chatted.

KangYoon, who was looking at them while smiling, shook his head.

“You've done well, everyone. I wish for us to meet in a better stage next time.”

“Thank you for your work.”

KangYoon hugged and handshaked each of the members of SeasonS and walked towards President Yoon MoonSoo who was behind them. He still had some work to do.

“Did the recording go well?”

“Yes. It came out really well. It's the best.”

KangYoon took the camcorder that President Yoon MoonSoo had recorded with and played the video. The video with suitable zoom ins and outs had even captured the members' expressions well. Especially, the dance routine where they shook their waste was

captured well. (T/N: This is 2008 I think, so camcorders, not smartphones)

“This is good. Please upload it like this. Don’t forget what I told you before too.”

“Yes. Never upload it using company IP. I remember it very well. I’m planning to upload it in a [PC-bang](#) around here somewhere.”

(T/N: PC-bang is a PC cafe, students usually use it for gaming)

KangYoon gave back the camcorder to President Yoon MoonSoo. Now, all work that he had to do was over. Not only did he do the stage, he also did the after-service.

KangYoon bid farewell with President Yoon MoonSoo and got on the train home.

‘Fuu... It’s so tiring.’

The moon was already high. KangYoon, who was immersed in fatigue all day fell into sleep as soon as the train departed.

KangYoon, who still had the effect from going to Daejeon the day before, went to work with sleepy eyes. He had to report the result to the President’s office soon so KangYoon did the last check on the report. He checked the budget he used, and the work he did, and such things, and he was organizing the report for the final results when...

‘What, is this?!’

KangYoon, who opened the internet to check the result of the video that President Yoon MoonSoo had uploaded, blinked his eyes several times in astonishment. Before he even looked at the result, the real-time popular search word had caught his eyes.

-1st SeasonS

-2nd Yen Department store SeasonS

-3rd SeasonS club dance

Several familiar words could be seen on the real-time popular search word list. 1st on the real-time popular search word list? KangYoon was puzzled at the absurd result.

At that moment, the phone rang. It was from President Yoon MoonSoo. KangYoon greeted lightly and went into topic.

“So you’ve been listed in the real-time popular search word list.”

-Yes. As you said, I’ve uploaded the video onto the video website. I’ve uploaded onto 3 portal sites and on a video-specialized website for a total of 4 places but... when I woke up from sleep it was there on the list just like that. Speculative news articles keep popping up so I’m about to die from overwork.

“They must be mostly from intern reporters. Watch the situation and react if there’s anything big. The results are good though.”

-Team Leader!! I will treat you big sometime. You’re the God of Stages, no the God of Music, a God!!

KangYoon ended his call while listening to words that made him get goosebumps in the morning. It was literally an insane result. He didn’t even think about real-time popular search word. He only expected about 2 million views on the video, but a huge result came out. 1st on the popular search word list means that all citizens would at least see the word ‘SeasonS’ at least once. He did his work too well for a low cost.

‘Looks like I’ll be scolded, eh?’

While being worried about a laughable thing where he might be scolded for doing his work too well, KangYoon headed to the President’s office.

As expected. Before she even saw the report, she mentioned the real-time popular search word list.

“For us to put a singer on the list we have to use a lot of staff and a lot of part time workers on top of that, but Team Leader Lee makes it look so easy, eh?”

“Ahaha...”

“We’ve received too little money. Just how can I describe this...”

President Lee HyunJi was also puzzled. KangYoon was exceptional, but he was too exceptional. As he had a lot of work to do with the girl group project, she had planned to take it easy with the work with the concert team. His main job was raising the girl group, and his sub job was the concert team but as he had done more than that, she was confused as to whether she should be happy or what.

“Team Leader Lee, you work too well. You work too well, so A, haha...”

The poker face President Lee HyunJi grabbed her head as she panicked in no small amounts this time. KangYoon’s power to put someone on the 1st on the popular search word list, and even an idol from another company at that, made her difficult as to whether to laugh or to cry.

President Lee HyunJi, in the end, burst out laughing.

“That was my mistake. I will call for a high fee from next time onwards. I’ve underevaluated Team Leader Lee too much. Thank you for your work. Oh, do you have some time today?”

“Is there something?”

“How about some drink at night? Along with the Chairman, the three of us.”

“I understand.”

“Finish your work early today and come to my office.”

KangYoon didn’t reject. He also had something to talk about anyway. KangYoon said ok and left the President’s office.

Inside his office, there weren’t many things that needed his attention. A concert had just ended and the girl group project was also going well. Just that there was something that got on his

mind.

‘The teamwork is not working out too well.’

Not long before he finished work.

KangYoon shook his head after reading the report that the trainers gave him.

‘They have a trait where they want to stand out rather than to match each other. Jung MinAh, Christie An and Han JooYeon are especially serious, and Lee SamSoon and Seo HanYu are trying to get alone. Ailee Jung is well... is just no good. Should I be more strict?’

As they were all stubborn, he had warned the trainers. However, the side effects of it were coming out. KangYoon thought that he should snap them off for a bit soon.

When he finished work, it was evening.

KangYoon went to the President’s office. Chairman Won JinMoon and President Lee HyunJi were already waiting for him there.

“Did you come?”

“Good evening, Chairman.”

“Good evening. I heard you made a big accident.”

“What accident.”

“Keke. If you did that much work with that much money, then it’s an accident. Kekeke.”

A giggle leaked out from Chairman Won JinMoon. Until now, there was no one who gave him the same worry as KangYoon did. The reason was so interesting the more he thought about it so he giggled continuously.

The three got on the Chairman’s car and headed to a high-class bar near the company. It was a quiet bar which only high members

of society visited.

“I always wanted to treat you. Please, receive one from me.”

“Thank you.”

Chairman Won JinMoon poured a high class alcohol to KangYoon’s glass. KangYoon received the nice colored alcohol and poured one for Chairman Won JinMoon and President Lee HyunJi. After a light [Geonbae](#) and they drank a little, the conversation began.

(= JP kanpai = EN cheers)

In a private place, Chairman Won JinMoon was easygoing while President Lee HyunJi was quiet.

They talked about work, but they also talked about private lives from time to time. Of course, there were high class informations about the entertainment world. Of course, the hottest topic was the real time popular searchword.

Chairman Won JinMoon spoke while filling KangYoon’s cup.

“I still find it funny. Miss HyunJi. How can one make a 1st search word with a countryside performance? Was it that easy?”

“It’s difficult. We also need to use part time workers and even make our employees go into emergency if we want to make it to the list.”

“But really... ha... KangYoon is so amazing.”

When a moderate amount of alcohol went in, Chairman Won JinMoon’s face had become red and he felt good. He didn’t stop his praise for KangYoon saying that the company had changed thanks to KangYoon nowadays.

“Good, I feel good. Do you want anything?”

“Do you mean something I want?”

“Yes. I will grant just one. If you want a raise in salary, then I’ll

give you a lot. I feel good today!!”

Unlike Chairman Won JinMoon who looked like he felt good, President Lee HyunJi narrowed her eyes. She knew well of the true meaning behind those words.

‘It’s his way of seeing through a person.’

A high class move in order to see through a person. It was a method that Chairman Won JinMoon used frequently. Of course, he would grant the wish. However, sometimes, the way he treated that person would change after that. It was an important junction deciding a person’s future company life.

While President Lee HyunJi became nervous, KangYoon became serious. He thought for a moment before answering.

“Can I request one thing?”

“Talk about it. Anything. I will grant it for you.”

“Please give me trainee Min JinSeo.”

“Eh?”

At the completely unexpected wish, both Chairman Won JinMoon and President Lee HyunJi widened their eyes.

The promise with Min JinSeo from last week had not left his mind. KangYoon was looking for a timing. He could have wished for a raise in his salary, but it was obvious that it would increase in the next salary negotiation. Instead of asking for an obvious thing like that, investing it in a work with more possibilities was more profitable in many ways. If he grabbed Min JinSeo, who was definitely going to succeed, and planned for her, it was a better profit for the future.

“I’m not her father.”

Chairman Won JinMoon panicked. A wish had just turned into a request for a trainee? Fortunately President Lee HyunJi explained from the side.

“I think he means a trainee for his work.”

“Really? I thought he was asking for marriage.”

“.....”

“Of course, it’s a joke. Min JinSeo, you say, who is she that you even request me for her? You don’t seem to be planning to go outside and set up a new company.”

Chairman Won JinMoon had never heard about this trainee. He knew well about trainees who had a good future and the singers, but there was no way he would know all the trainees. President Lee HyunJi was the same.

“She’s a trainee in the Acting Practice Class. She’s currently a trainee who’s moved to the Singer Preparation Class. I want to plan for her by myself.”

“Please continue.”

Chairman Won JinMoon wanted to know about why a singer-specialized planner wanted a place in the acting side. KangYoon calmly explained.

“Min JinSEo is a trainee who has more potential for acting rather than singing. Although, she isn’t within my jurisdiction, I had watched for all this time. However, as she was moved from the acting class to the trainee class I watched her trembling.”

“Is that so?”

Chairman Won JinMoon drank the strong alcohol. KangYoon was a man who was unpredictable as always. He became interested.

“I’ve judged that throwing away a trainee with potential is a loss for the company. So I request you now. Please make me in charge of trainee Min JinSeo.”

“So, you saw potential and talent for acting in that trainee? So you want to raise her by yourself, is this what you’re saying?”

“Yes.”

KangYoon, who emptied his glass, received a glass from Chairman Won JinMoon again. He was starting to get drunk.

“Do you have any proof that she’ll succeed?”

“I apologize, but I don’t have any data yet. The only thing I can show you is myself.”

“Oho, so you yourself guarantee it, yes?”

“That is so.”

KangYoon already knew that Min JinSeo will succeed. Although he knew that the future was changing, Min JinSeo was still Min JinSeo. The people who will look at her talent and use her in TV broadcasts were still there. In other words, she was a blank cheque. Although he thought that it would disappoint him if Min JinSeo went to another company, above all, it was a judgement that he made weighing on her possibilities.

“I’ll go to the bathroom for a bit.”

Chairman Won JinMoon left the place for a bit. He meant that he would think about it.

Now the two people left, KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi, lifted their glasses. KangYoon hit lightly with her glass and put it on his mouth.

“I always think, but Mr. KangYoon always says interesting things.”

“Is that so? But It’s a possible story.”

“How high?”

“Above 80%.”

“I don’t like that.”

Although he mentioned a very high probability, President Lee HyunJi shook her head while saying she didn’t like it. She seemed

to have become a little bit drunk as she smiled and said to KangYoon.

“Please use a little more. What’s the ‘possibility’ that Team Leader KangYoon thinks of?”

While President Lee HyunJi was giving signs with her eyes as if she knew KangYoon’s thoughts, Chairman Won JinMoon came in. He looked drunk as his face was bright red.

“Good, KangYoon. I permit it.”

“Chairman. Why don’t you lis..”

“Miss HyunJi. It’s alright, alright. It’s KangYoon who’s doing it, right?”

“You’ve become drunk.”

“No no.”

Chairman Won JinMoon shook his head. Although he was very drunk, it wasn’t to the point that he couldn’t control his body. He smiled and aproached KangYoon.

“You’re trying to show me something again this time as well, right? Can i look forward to it?”

While placing his arms on KangYoon’s shoulders, Chairman Won JinMoon lifted his glass. KangYoon also naturally clang the glass with him. Then Chairman Won JinMoon said in a low voice.

“I will grant your wish.”

“Thank you.”

“However.”

Chairman Won JInMoon interrupted KangYoon’s words.

“I have expectations. Remember that.”

“I understand.”

Chairman Won JinMoon lifted his arm and went back to his seat.

Then, he laughed as if all of it had never happened.

KangYoon was requesting this to show him something.

Chairman Won JinMoon was thinking like that

‘So today’s the last day.’

Min JinSeo headed towards the practice room powerlessly. The last day of the promise with KangYoon was today. As she thought that today would be the last time she would practice thoughtless singing, she also thought that it was kind of disappointing.

While preparing and stretching her body, the trainer came inside. However, before the roll call.

“Min JinSeo.”

“Yes.”

“Go to the Planning Team Leader’s office on the 5th floor right now.”

At that moment, the trainees all whispered to each other. They all shot gazes mixed with envy, jealousy and a variety of other emotions.

The Planning Team Leader on the 5th floor was famous in many ways. As they also heard that the main character behind pushing an unknown group, SeasonS, on top of the real-time search word list, the trainees were trying their best to catch his eyes.

When Min JinSeo entered the Planning Team Leader’s office on the 5th floor, KangYoon was waiting for her.

“Welcome.”

“Good day to you, sir.”

After exchanging light greetings, the talk began while drinking the tea that KangYoon brought.

“I called for you directly as I thought it will be good to tell you myself.”

“Is something up?”

“From today onwards, you will be moved from the Singer Preparation Class to the Acting Debut Preparation Class.”

“What?!”

Min JinSeo ended up burning her tongue on the tea. It was because a bomb dropped from KangYoons mouth. It wasn't the Singer Debut Preparation Class and it's the Acting Debut Preparation Class!! She was so shocked that her heart was pounding.

“A...A...De...Debut Preparation Class?”

“Yes. Debut Preparation Class. You'll debut soon, so you'll have to resolve yourself very well.”

“What?! Sir. I can't even act well right now, but a debut so soon...”

She was dumbfounded. Min JinSeo thought that she wasn't prepared yet. Debut was something that she didn't even talk about yet... and yet, she couldn't differentiate if this was a dream or not.

However, KangYoon reminded her.

“I told you. To wait one week. You waited one week, and I fulfilled your expectations. Ok, now?”

“Sir...”

Expectations, he had surpassed it by a large amount. She had just talked with him a few times about her dreams but he knew her more than anyone else.

Min JinSeo was now resolved to listen to anything that KangYoon may say.

“Originally, we are supposed to do a provisional contract, but the debut will be soon. So, let's skip the provisional contract and do a formal one later. It's a loss for you as well.”

“Please do as you will, sir.”

From Min JinSeo, the words that she will believe in whatever KangYoon will do, had come out. Debut was still unrealistic to her. Min JinSeo could feel her heart trembling.

Whether KangYoon knew that or not, he kept talking.

“Today, you will have an orientation about the Acting Debut Preparation Class with me. Although it’s called an Acting Debut Preparation Class, it’s just you alone, so it might be a bit lonely. It won’t be a lot different from normal, but the amount of practice will increase. If you need anything then tell me. I will support you with a teacher or anything you need.”

“.....Yes. Thank you.”

Tears could be seen on Min JinSeo’s big eyes. She still couldn’t believed the joy that she could stay at the company and keep acting, and at the same time she couldn’t believe the fact that she will have her debut here. With a resolve to do her best in whatever acting she will do in the future, she kept each and every word that came out of KangYoon’s mouth.

After talking with Min JinSeo, KangYoon immediately headed towards the 4th floor meeting room. Today, there was a meeting regarding the girl group project. KangYoon, who thought up of topics that might be mentioned today while organizing some data, also thought about the plans for the future.

The meeting wasn’t that different from always. From the talk that it will be better to do it like this in the future to the talks about budget, and a variety of talks were exchanged. KangYoon didn’t interrupt and let the employees freely and actively talk to each other. He tried to talk as little as possible inside the meeting room, and he induced the employees to talk more and more.

When the topics were settled and the meeting was about to end, KangYoon asked the employees as a side note.

“Has the relationship between Jung MinAh and Lee SamSoon

become better?”

“.....”

The active people all became silent. Jung MinAh and Lee SamSoon were members that KangYoon had put a lot of thoughts into. As he had put the two members who were completely different to each other, there was no choice but to put more thoughts into them. However, as everyone was silent, KangYoon’s expression became cold.

“How about Han JooYeon and Ailee Jung?”

“Those two don’t have a problem. They’re getting along well.”

Fortunately these two didn’t have a problem. KangYoon’s cold eyes returned. Relationship between the members was something that KangYoon was sensitive about. It was no wonder that everyone had become nervous.

“As far as I know, Seo HanYu and Christie An don’t have a problem either. In the end, it’s a problem with Jung MinAh and Lee SamSoon. Well, it might be fortunate that they didn’t cause any problems.”

“Team Leader.”

“Manager Team Leader, please speak.”

Manager Team Leader Han TaeHyung spoke carefully while reading KangYoon’s mood. He was the person in charge of the managers who were managing the members of the girl group project.

“In regards to Lee SamSoon and Jung MinAh, they can be said to have a bad affinity to the point that we can describe them as water and oil. Unlike Jung MinAh who likes sophisticated things, as far as I know, Lee SamSoon likes more practical things rather than fashion. I think that there’s a problem there.”

“.....”

“Team Leader. How about you change their room mates? I really agree with your words, Team Leader, however, Jung MinAh’s stubbornness is very considerable. Lee SamSoon will die out with a word from you but Jung MinAh’s personality isn’t like that. We should conso...”

KangYoon shook his head.

“If we don’t do it now, then opportunity will disappear forever. Whether it’s Lee SamSoon or Jung MinAh, they’re both people who will play a crucial role in the team in the future. Training to match each other is obvious, they also have things to learn from each other. If we suppress them now, then the opportunity will disappear forever. I cannot approve of that.”

There was persuasive power in KangYoon’s words. The mangers also knew the meaning behind KangYoon’s words. MG Entertainment group singers were all stubborn. The discord between the members also happened frequently because they didn’t give way to each other. KangYoon wanted to prevent this beforehand.

As everyone agreed, they nodded their heads.

“Did we plan for a volunteer activity in one month?”

“Yes. Team Leader.”

Planning Team Vice-Head Jeong SeokHo spoke. He participated in place of the Team Head who was away for work.

“Let’s pull it by 2 weeks. Is that possible?”

At the following words from KangYoon, everyone’s eyes widened.

Resting time.

The 6 girls who were immersed in practicing were lying down while producing steam from their bodies. They didn’t even have the strength to lift anything due to the powerful practice.

However, suddenly, the door opened and KangYoon came in. As he was busy from the recent concert and whatnot, he wasn't seen too often, but now that he showed up, the girls all stood up.

"You can all relax and lie down."

At KangYoon's words, the girls nervously sat down. KangYoon gathered their attention and went into topic.

"In 2 weeks, we will go to WonJu in KangWon province for a volunteer activity."

"What?! Volunteer activity?"

All of them spoke at the same time in a loud voice. Why so suddenly? Not minding that, KangYoon was still calm.

"At that time, we'll go through the first general evaluation. Look forward to it. For details, you can just look at this. You can ask the questions to the trainers."

KangYoon left the paperwork envelope and left the place. After he left, the practice room was in a mess.

"What is this? Orphanage? Charity performance? Does he mean for us to prepare starting now?"

Jung MinAh, who read the contents fell into panic. 2 weeks was a short period of time. Moreover, KangYoon didn't say anything. This was just pure nonsense.

"MinAh, calm down. First..."

"SamSoon, you stay still. This won't do. I will go talk to him."

"Lee SamSoon tried to hold Jung MinAh back, but Jung MinAh seemed as if she couldn't hold back as she stood up abruptly and tried to follow KangYoon. However, Lee SamSoon grabbed her hand tightly.

"Endure it. If the Team Leader says so, then we have to do it. Team Leader's words are always correct."

“Ah, really... get out.”

“Jung MinAh, SamSoon’s right.”

When Jung MinAh was about to push Lee SamSoon, Han JooYeon stepped in.

“You stay out of it.”

“It’s our problem so why should I stay out of it? Jung MinAh, stay still.”

“Argh really!”

In the end, Jung MinAh couldn’t hold back her anger and ended up erupting. However, she seemed to have given up when everyone gave the ‘don’t do it’ gaze as she sat on the ground. A fire-like personality was a problem in a variety of ways.

Han JooYeon consoled her from the side and Jung MinAh tried to hold back while taking deep breaths. When she calmed down, she could see the contents again.

“But is the stage time 50 minutes?”

“No way.”

At Ailee Jung’s question, Christie An replied. A 50-minute performance was in no way, easy for a trainee. However, there was a document about the contents. Everyone gathered and looked at the contents.

“The song isn’t that hard.”

“The dance looks hard though...”

Ailee Jung and Han JooYeon spoke different things while looking at the list. The song was not difficult. It was one foreign song plus 2 duet songs that they sang a lot in practice. However, the dance song was the problem. There was a list of legendary foreign singer’s textbook song.

“Ha... Haha...”

Jung MinAh laughed emptily while looking at Ailee Jung. The other girls seemed to be of the same mind as they all sighed.

‘Do what with that slow poke here?’

Whether she knew or not, Ailee Jung only tilted her head.

Chapter 33: Awakening Of Silver Light (1)

Although a lot of things happened recently, KangYoon was putting a lot of effort into the girl group project. Especially, since he invested a lot into the girls' teamwork. He intentionally put together two girls, who had bad affinity with each other, and constantly received progress reports, and he put efforts into scheduling practice where everybody got together. Especially since he tried to bring up teamwork by analyzing a lot of the data about their teamwork.

However, even after that, when he had a look at the most recent report, KangYoon's head dropped down automatically.

“To think I have to use a harsh move like this...”

KangYoon creased his brows when he looked at the paperworks titled ‘Wonju Volunteer Activity’. Originally, this volunteer activity wasn't for evaluation, the original objective was for everyone to enjoy performing while getting used to the gazes of the people. However, as they lacked teamwork, he had changed the objective.

While KangYoon was concentrating on his work, someone came in after a knock. It was Min JinSeo, who was always eye-catching with her tall height and thin body figure.

“Welcome.”

“Good day to you, sir.”

Min JinSeo now showed good will rather than nervousness towards KangYoon. Her eyes contained a lot of softness and gentleness towards her savior and her supporting pillar at the same time.

“Why did you call me?”

“I had something to give you, but I didn't have the time to go downstairs. Did I interrupt you in your practice?”

“No, you’re busy though, aren’t you?”

Min JinSeo marveled while looking at the traces of work on KangYoon’s desk. It was like this the last time as well, and this time too, there is a lot of work on his desk. This man lived really busily.

KangYoon held out the paperwork which was at the top of the pile of papers. When she received it, she saw that it was a script.

“One-man act? There’s even a song.”

“It’s a one man-act script used a lot for practicing. There’s a charity performance in 2 weeks, do you think you can do it?”

“Where?”

At the word ‘performance’, Min JinSeo felt more excited than nervous. Looking at her expression, KangYoon knew immediately.

‘This girl is an actor sent from heaven.’

KangYoon could affirm that his choice hadn’t been wrong while looking at that. He talked about the performance to her, while she was reading the script slowly.

“In 2 weeks, the next generation girl group will go to Wonju for a volunteer activity. There, we’re going to do a charity performance and I want you to do a one-man act.”

“Then am I going as well?”

“Yes. You can think that you’re resting for 3 days and 2 nights. You’ll have your debut soon so you can think it’s a practice performance.”

“I understand.”

“I will tell you the detailed schedule through your manager.”

“Okay.”

Min JinSeo left the office and KangYoon started working again.

The pile of work on his desk decreased rapidly, but time went by

fast as well.

When all the work was about to disappear, the moon was nigh.

“Haa...”

KangYoon, who put on his blazer to leave work, heaved a long sigh. It was a sigh due to the fatigue from work. When he left the lobby, everyone had already left and there was no one there.

When he arrived, HeeYoon greeted him.

“Did you have a good trip, my dear brother?”

“Yes. I had a good trip.”

“Kyak!”

KangYoon embraced HeeYoon as soon as he saw her. HeeYoon exclaimed as she was slightly surprised, but KangYoon didn't pay any attention to that. He felt like his fatigue was melting away thanks to HeeYoon's warmth. HeeYoon also pat his back and accepted him.

“Thank you for your work today too, oppa.”

“You too. Did you get your dialysis today?”

“Of course.”

HeeYoon, who took KangYoon's clothes and hanged them up, looked like a wife. KangYoon told her that she didn't have to do that, but HeeYoon replied that she did it because she liked it and pushed KangYoon to the living room.

After he had a shower, KangYoon came to the living room and lay down straight away. Now that he had rested at home, he felt like his body had become better. On his side, HeeYoon sat.

“HeeYoon. The week after next week, I won't be home for about 3 days.”

“Eh? Are you going somewhere?”

“I'm going to Wonju. You can stay at home alone, right?”

“All the way to Wonju? Are you going because of work?”

“You know I’m doing the girl group project, right? It’s related to that.”

“I understand. Do I look like a little kid? Don’t worry about me and have a nice trip.”

KangYoon was always worried about HeeYoon. Of course, HeeYoon wasn’t a child who couldn’t stay alone. However, he was worried that something may happen to her.

“I will do fine by myself so don’t worry and go, my dear brother.”

HeeYoon knew KangYoon’s mind well. And so, she was always sorry for him – she knew very well that she dragged him back. Her brother had an amazing ability, and he couldn’t fly high because of her – As she always thought like that, she was always sorry.

“I should sleep. HeeYoon, you have a good sleep too.”

KangYoon, who was tired, eventually went inside his room and went to sleep. However, HeeYoon wasn’t that sleepy.

“Today wasn’t that fun.”

Especially today, there wasn’t anything good to watch on TV as well. HeeYoon went inside her room and opened a book. She thought that she may become sleepy if she saw her school textbook.

However, in the middle of the night, her mobile phone rang loudly.

“Hello?”

-HeeYoon!! It’s me!!

The one who called HeeYoon was JooAh. Although it was night, JooAh’s voice was very loud.

“Did something happen?”

-I didn’t call you too late, right? I just finished.

“Of course you called too late.”

-Uk.....

HeeYoon and JooAh seemed to have gotten close as they were unrestrained towards each other. Eventually, the two started chatting, and the phone had become a chatting tool.

While chatting for a lot, HeeYoon asked.

“JooAh, do you go to volunteer activities in your company?”

-Volunteer activity? We do. We go and perform and donate and advertise that ‘we do things like this too’ and stuff like that. Why?

“My brother said he’s going to Wonju for one. I was curious so I just asked.”

-Oh, really? Wonju?

JooAh seemed to have become curious as she asked again.

-Did you ask who he’s going with?

“No, he just said he’s going because of the new girl group.”

-Really? The next-gen girl group? So it’s for a practice stage.

“Did you also do things like that, JooAh?”

-No. I had no time for that so I had my debut first. Tch, I’m envious. They’re blessed, alright.

JooAh, who expressed her pity, talked with HeeYoo for over 2 hours. Thanks to that, HeeYoon could arrive 1 step before she was late at school the next day.

2 weeks went by in a flash, and the time for volunteer activity had come.

The 6 girls had come leisurely with a lot of luggage before the appointed time. Everyone had at least one travel bag and a backpack each.

While the girls were waiting inside the company lobby while

chatting, KangYoon also arrived before the appointed time.

“This way.”

KangYoon called for the girls and gave out an envelope.

“What is this?”

Jung MinAh asked while opening the envelope. However, after she had a look, her eyes widened. There were [3 Lady Shin Saimdang's](#). While everyone was surprised, KangYoon spoke.

(T/N: meaning 50,000 KRW notes, 3 makes a total of 150,000KRW≈130USD, interesting note, 50000 won notes didn't exist back then in 2008)

“You can come to this place together by express bus. The address is inside the envelope so arrive there before 6 o'clock. Don't be late.”

Then KangYoon left the lobby.

“Team Leader, Team Leader!!”

Jung MinAh became shocked and followed him, but KangYoon had left on the prepared car.

“What the hell? Did he just tell us to go by bus?!”

“I think so...”

Jung MinAh thought it was absurd and her insides boiled rapidly. She couldn't do anything about her fiery temper. Christie An was pouring oil to the fire.

“...Lol.”

Seo HanYu also seemed shocked as she couldn't close her mouth. No matter how bad of a treatment the trainees received, this was unprecedented. An absurd thing like this was a first for them in their 3 years as a trainee. No, he had just told them to go to Wonju by just giving them the money. This was more than just absurd.

“sob... Did we just get thrown away?”

“It’s al’ight. It’ll be alright. We will just go there.”

Lee SamSoon was consoling Ailee Jung who burst into tears due to the absurd situation.

“Whoa...”

Han JooYeon became dumbfounded and she lost her words. Even so, they were all of one mind.

‘What kind of human is that!!’

Just that they couldn’t express it.

President Lee HyunJi who was on the wheel herself, currently couldn’t hold back her laughter.

“Hahaha!! Haha!! Oh, it’s so funny... I’m sorry, Team Leader KangYoon. Haha. I still can’t forget those kids’ faces. Hahahaha!!”

She laughed even now when she thought about it. As her normal poker face had disappeared without a trace, and laughter kept coming out, she felt like she was going crazy. She could still clearly see their dumbfounded faces after they heard KangYoon’s words when they were rejoicing due to the money.

However, KangYoon’s face was serious.

‘Will they be able to come by the appointed time?’

6 girls.

Although he gave them only the money in pretext of them gathering their opinions and come to Wonju, his heart was nervous. Of course, as they were 17 year-olds or above, and are about to enter adulthood, it wasn’t something impossible for them. Just in case, had had ordered 2 members of the managing team to trail them. However, he couldn’t do anything about himself being worried.

“Hahahaha.”

“.....”

Amidst of President Lee HyunJi's laugh, KangYoon was headed to Wonju with a serious face.

KangYoon's fears were right on the spot.

"Is it really here?"

"Idiot, we need to go to the central terminal. We're going to Kangwon province, so why are we going to the southern terminal? Do you want to go to Jeolla province?"

"We need to go to East Seoul."

Inside the subway, the 6 girls were in a mess while saying that they were all right. There were 4 express bus terminals in Seoul. Amidst of them, they need to go to the East Seoul's one in order to go to Wonju, but the girls were fighting while saying it's the Central terminal, Southern terminal, and East Seoul terminal.

"Unnis, can't we search on the internet?"

Seo HanYu who was fed up with the dispute, carefully spoke, but it was very difficult to hold back the older girls who had lost all of their reasoning. Excluding her, everyone else was 18. Already, they were wasting time by saying that they were right while saying their routes.

"Believe in me. For Wonju, we need to go to East Seoul terminal."

Lee SamSoon, spoke fast, which was rare for her, while tapping her chest. However, Han JooYeon shook her head and denied it.

"That's the one going to Chungcheong province. The Central's the correct one. I heard that it goes to Honam but it also goes to Kangwon province."

Then, Jung MinAh also chimed in.

"How can you go to Kangwon province from Central? What goes to Jeolla province only goes to Jeolla province. What goes to Busan will only go to Busan. But Gangnam terminal is the biggest one so it will be alright, let's go there."

Christie An also spoke, trying not to lose to others.

“I asked my friends since I didn’t know. They said we need to go to the Seoul terminal to get there.”

In the end, the 4 girls couldn’t narrow their opinions down and just cycled around the subway. Some tried to get off at the central park where a terminal was, and got held back, and when they were about to head to Gangnam terminal, they fought with each other saying it’s not. For a long while, only time had passed. In the end, Ailee Jung, who massaged her hurting legs screamed.

“Hey!! Let’s go to each one!!!!”

“.....”

The girls who were at the point where they were about to grab each other’s hair, were all suppressed by Ailee Jung. In truth, they all did that because they didn’t want to lose, they knew that this was a waste of time.

‘Isn’t searching the internet faster?’

Seo HanYu couldn’t understand why they were going through suffering like this even though they could just ask the internet in a nearby pc-bang. However, her thoughts flew away due to the older girls’ fast walking.

“What? It isn’t here?”

The girls, who arrived at central park, their first destination, became disappointed after they knew that there was no bus to Wonju. And Han JooYeon, who claimed it was here became embarrassed as she scratched her face quietly.

“Where’s next?”

“Gangnam.”

The girls headed to Gangnam Outer city bus terminal. Moving via train was hard for those girls even though they were in their teens. Moreover, they couldn’t find any seats today.

“Huh? There’s a seat.”

When they were inside the subway for a long time, they saw an empty seat far away. Jung MinAh quickly ran and sat on the seat. She was comparable to ‘Usign Boltwo’ in speed. (T/N: This author is so funny with the names, if you didn’t get it, it’s referring to Usain Bolt)

“Tch.”

The 5 girls, who missed their opportunity, and expressed their disappointment and went towards Jung MinAh. They were very envious of her who was sitting. But then...

“Ailee, does your leg hurt much?”

“Yesh...”

As cute as always, her answer was said in a cute way.

Jung MinAh hesitated for a moment before giving the seat to her.

“Wow, you’re kind.”

Han JooYeon shrugged her shoulders as if surprised. However, Jung MinAh was chic.

“Buy me a drink next time.”

“Thanks.”

Jung MinAh said it was nothing but Ailee Jung was very thankful to her for giving her the seat.

The girls who arrived at Gangnam Outer City Terminal quickly asked whether there was a bus to Wonju. However...

“What? There isn’t?”

At the staff’s negative answer, Han JooYeon, who ran as soon as they arrived, drooped her shoulders. The staff said that there wasn’t and met the next customer. There was no time for them to ask as there was a long line.

Jung MinAh acquired points for giving up the seat, but those

points flew away in a flash.

“I’m sorry...”

With her with a reddened face at the back, the girls started discussing for a solution. No, there was no solution. Seo HanYu ran to the computer on one side of the terminal and found the terminal through searching the internet.

“It’s East Seoul.”

“SamSoon was right.”

Ailee spoke as if there wasn’t anything, but the other girls at the same age had to drop their heads. In the end, they had only wasted time and effort.

But then, Jung MinAh’s phone started ringing loudly.

“Hello?”

-Is this MinAh? I’m KangYoon.

“Eek? Ahjussi?!”

-What do you mean ‘eek’?

As soon as she got the call from KangYoon, Jung MinAh shouted as she was surprised. No, all the girls were shocked after they realized that it was Kangyoon. Whether he knew or not, KangYoon went into topic.

-Where are you at now?

“I... We are going to the terminal to get on the bus.

-Now? What did you do until now?

“We...it’s the first time we’re going to the terminal...we will go as soon as possible.”

-Okay. Call this number if anything happens.

“Yes. We will go soon.”

Jung MinAh quickly finished the call with KangYoon. She felt

like she might slip something if she talked any more.

“What did the Team Leader say?”

Han JooYeon asked as she was curious. Jung MinAh sighed and replied.

“He asked us if we’re coming.”

“Was there anything else?”

Christie An also asked as she was worried.

“He said for us to come as quickly as possible. He also said to call if anything happens.”

“The Team Leader told us to hurry. Let’s go.”

At Jung MinAh’s words, Seo HanYu started fanning the flames. However, Jung MinAh just nodded her head.

“Yes. Let’s go to East Seoul.”

“I still have a bad premonition...”

Lee SamSoon was worried that they might make a mistake again, but Jung MinAh calmed them all down as if it was alright.

The 6 girls headed to East Seoul Terminal like that.

At Angel’s House in a mountain in Wonju, Kangwon province.

This was the place where MG Entertainment staff and trainees would do their volunteer activities while staying for 3 days.

KangYoon, President Lee HyunJi, and the other employees all arrived before the trainees and exchanged greetings with the owner and the children of Angel’s House. Following that, they spent their time while preparing various things such as work, and the distribution of rooms.

President Lee HyunJi and the employees did charity work for the children and the villagers of Angel’s House while KangYoon remained to check the various equipments. Although this was a

volunteer activity, his aim stood in raising them. While re-checking the equipment and the performance order, KangYoon drew up how he should play the performance in his head.

The day became dark, and it became evening. All the people, including the people from Angel's House and the villagers, had gathered in the field of Angel's House to have a barbeque as it was the first night. Soon, a party started with the smoke of grilling meat and the loud noise.

However, KangYoon was not present.

‘They’re too late.’

KangYoon was at the entrance of Angel's House. He was waiting for the girls who hadn't arrived yet alone. Although he was worried, he hadn't called Jung MinAh or the other girls. It was because he had already received a report from the staff who were following them, unknown to them that they were alright.

“Aren't you eating?”

To KangYoon, who was waiting alone for the girls, President Lee HyunJi approached while emitting the smell of grilled meat.

“I will eat after those kids come.”

“You look after those kids a lot. They aren't even singers yet.”

“Aren't they my children? I should look after them.”

President Lee HyunJi's words were reasonable. Not only MG Entertainment, but even in other entertainment companies, it wasn't exaggerated to say that trainees were disposables. One of the countless choices to make a singer. This was the hidden definition of trainees. There were even jokes about feeding 2 portions of pork to the trainees while they fed 10 portions of beef to actual singers.

“Mr. KangYoon is sure different. You're a lot different from the other Planning Team Leaders.”

“How am I different?”

President Lee HyunJi thought that the talk may get long and sat next to KangYoon.

“As for the intuition, I already told you before so I won’t say that again. These days, what I feel is your attitude towards the singers or the trainees. Originally, treatment of singers and trainees are different. Giving 0.1 to trainees if you gave 10 to the singers is an obvious thing. That’s how you decrease the amount of investments, and the trainees will try their best to become singers. This is the traditional way. However, Mr. KangYoon give more to those trainees. I think about...3?”

“They’ll do better if they have the confidence.”

“That’s the difference.”

President Lee HyunJi tapped her palms.

“If one person doesn’t become big for sure, then that investment will remain as a huge minus for the company. Then, this means that another celebrity has to make up for that minus later. In some sense, Mr. KangYoon’s actions are a minus for the company. However, nobody can say anything to you in the company. Why? Even if you make a minus, they can’t say anything as you made too much of a plus. Hahaha. I find that very funny. Do you know how hard the board is trying to find fault in you?”

“Not my problem.”

KangYoon didn’t have any interest in company politics. If KangYoon had any interest in company politics and the like, the directors might try to seduce him, but as he didn’t the directors all had a headache.

“And that’s why Mr. KangYoon is different. The other Planning Team Leaders all try to catch the eyes of the directors to get more budget, but you don’t have anything like that, don’t you? You only look at one thing: Whether this person will succeed or not.

Although I don't know how Min JinSeo will turn out, if it's the current you, I look forward to it. Anyway, I like you very much, Mr KangYoon."

"Thank you."

"I wish for us to work together in the future as well."

President Lee HyunJi tapped KangYoon's shoulders and stood up. Then, she pointed towards the 2 taxis which were slowly coming to the entrance. The girls were getting off the taxis.

President Lee HyunJi went inside and KangYoon quietly waited for the girls to come. As soon as they got off the taxi, the girls found KangYoon and ran in front of him.

"....."

"....."

Silence flowed. Neither Kangyoon nor the girls said anything.

The appointed time of 6 o'clock had been long past, and now it had become 9 o'clock. Everyone knew that KangYoon was meticulous with time. The girls were worrying how much scolding they'll get from him and dropped their heads.

"Have you all eaten?"

".....Sorry?"

"Have all of you eaten?"

However, a completely unexpected question flew at them. While everyone was looking at each other dumbfoundedly...

grumble—

"Oh....."

From Ailee Jung, a huge physiological sound could be heard. Ailee Jung's face turned bright red in embarrassment, and the other girls couldn't laugh or cry. Amidst the nervousness, KangYoon spouted out.

“You must be hungry. Let’s eat.”

“What?”

“Go unpack and come to the field. Your rooms are...”

After KangYoon told them their room numbers, he headed to the field.

When KangYoon disappeared, the girls still couldn’t understand the situation and looked at each other’s faces dumbfoundedly.

“What was that? Are we getting disciplined in the field?”

“Ah... Kill me already.”

Jung MinAh and Lee SamSoon all spoke while sighing, and the girls headed towards the field quickly after they unpacked their luggage. They changed into training outfits to endure the discipline a little more easily.

However...

“Come here. Eat.”

The scene that spread in front of the girls were very different to what they were thinking.

“Wha, iz, dat?”

While looking at the scene in front of her, Lee SamSoon was so shocked that her eyes looked like they were about to pop out. Seo HanYu was the same. Meat, in front of them, a huge amount of meat was piled up. Even after they rubbed their eyes, the mountains of meat was real. With a grilling sound, the person who was grilling the meat was KangYoon.

“What are you doing? You’re not eating?”

“We will!!”

However, when KangYoon shouted, the girls realized that this scene was indeed reality. This non-reality that KangYoon was grilling beef with a pair of tongs in hand, was in truth, real.

“Thank you for the meal.”

However, don't people say that hunger is the best spice? The nervousness they usually had in front of KangYoon had collapsed instantly in front of their appetite. Then, they started devouring the meat. As the girls didn't have a proper meal, they were all hungry. They felt like they will forgive anything that might be said to them while they were eating.

However, unlike what they thought, KangYoon silently grilled the meat and handed them out.

‘It's melting~!!’

‘Is this meat or cotton candy?’

‘sob sob... It's sho gud...’

It was the best meat. They all felt like their suffering today had just melted with the meat.

The meat they were eating disappeared like melting snow.

“Unnis, please eat more.”

From some time, Min JinSeo also held out the meat to the girls. Thanks to that, KangYoon could concentrate on grilling the meat. Min JinSeo not only passed them meat, but she also gave out drinks and Kimchi, and thanks to that, KangYoon could relax a lot.

“Why did you come out? You should have rested inside.”

“You're working so how could I rest?”

“Thanks.”

KangYoon and Min JinSeo exchanged amiable conversation while KangYoon grilled the meat.

‘That bi...’

Jung MinAh saw the scene where Min JinSeo was chatting livelily with KangYoon while eating the meat. She strangely didn't want to see that.

“Unni?”

“HanYu.”

“What’s up? Why are you frowning?”

“Dayum. I did that? No way.”

Seo HanYu asked, but Jung MinAh rejected and vaguely passed it. However, she was indeed frowning her face a little while looking at KangYoon from time to time. She already couldn’t taste the meat as she didn’t know if she was chewing on meat or chewing on rubber.

After the meal ended, KangYoon silently put on the rubber gloves. Then, the ones who paled were the girls.

“Team Leader, Team Leader!! Don’t do that! I’ll do that!!”

KangYoon was about to go into washing the dishes when Lee SamSoon stepped in first. The other girls were the same. There was no way they could let the Team Leader wash the dishes on top of making him grill the meat even after they were late. KangYoon shook his head while saying it was alright, but in the end, he was robbed of the rubber gloves by the girls.

“It’s really alright though.”

“I’m not alright with it. We’re thankful so please rest.”

While contradicting herself, Jung MinAh pushed KangYoon’s back. Although her heart pounded a little when she grabbed KangYoon’s shoulders, her expression didn’t show any of that. A teen girl’s emotions were something like this.

It was when the girls were washing the dishes joyfully as KangYoon didn’t scold them and rather welcomed them. KangYoon just spat out some words, as a side note.

“Let’s do well in the performance tomorrow.”

“Yes!!!!”

Was it the power of meat? The field resounded with the girls' voices.

The next day.

Inside an empty space in Angel's House.

"Let's have a go again."

Han JooYeon encouraged everyone and they went into formation again.

They had 3 hours left until the evening performance. However, the group dance song didn't go as well as they had expected.

"Ailee. You keep being late by half a beat. Follow me closely."

"Ok."

Jung MinAh continuously scolded Ailee Jung. However unlike Jung MinAh who was flexible and fast, Ailee Jung wasn't that fast. Although she was just flexible enough, Ailee was slow. Jung MinAh was about to be fed up, but she suppressed it and tried her best for Ailee to catch up with her.

The group dance was a difficult homework for them. It wasn't a problem with difficulty. Matching with each other. This was their biggest homework. However, there were always little differences. Although they trained as a group until now, the difference in each other's beat was very serious.

"Ah.....Again."

"Ok."

Jung MinAh and Ailee Jung were showing their beauty of being fast and being slow and waved their bodies.

'It's a party of grey light.'

KangYoon, who peeked at the girls' practice, heaved a sigh when he saw the grey light emitting from the girls. The grey emitted

when they danced made KangYoon subconsciously crease his eyes.

Even after they practiced more in order to match, the grey didn't disappear. KangYoon concentrated on the dance in order to not just judge by the light, but as he saw various problems in beat and movement, there was nothing he could say.

‘This is a problem I’ve expected.

Even so, KangYoon didn't say ‘You have to do this’ and he did not scold them. It was easy to scold them now. However, KangYoon was thinking of the bigger picture. The girls must feel reality properly.

KangYoon headed to Min JinSeo, who was practicing after she borrowed a small room, after leaving the girls. KangYoon quietly opened the door where Min JinSeo was in.

“And kiss his mouth

To heart's desire,

And on his kisses

At last expire!”

“.....”

In front of KangYoon, who just opened the door, Min JinSeo was immersed in training. However, the problem was that the distance was too close. Due to being absorbed, Min JinSeo didn't even realize that KangYoon was right in front of her.

“Oh, I'm sorry.”

“No, I should be.”

She could have been surprised at KangYoon's sudden appearance, but Min JinSeo didn't panic and quietly stepped back. KangYoon also calmed himself down and just laughed it off.

“What kind of line is this from a one-man act?”

“It's a line from Faust. It's about a girl Faust loves, Gretchen, falling into the an abyss as she falls in love with Faust. There's even a song for it, do you want to listen?”

“...It's not R-18, right?”

Although he did ask for a one-man act script from the trainer, the chosen script was too good. It was a mistake that he couldn't check the script due to being too busy. Whether she knew of what KangYoon felt or not, Min JinSeo pointed at herself with her thumb.

“Do you want to have a look? I'm very confident.”

“...Ok. There will be the elderly too, so it won't be a problem... I think.”

“Sorry?”

“No, okay.”

KangYoon sat with expectant eyes. The level of acting of Min JinSeo, as he knew it, was already at a considerable level.

Unfortunately, acting did not produce any light. KangYoon was disappointed that he couldn't see any light from the parts which were not related to music such as singing and dancing.

While KangYoon was exclaiming at Min JinSeo's acting ability. She started singing. Then, white light started emitting from her.

‘It's white.’

While KangYoon was satisfied that she may show a good performance tomorrow, the light from her started getting denser.

“That my sweet Gretchen's form, so oft caress'd!”

Faust's lover, Gretchen. Min JinSeo's voice, which was acting Gretchen, as she lost more and more strength due to the bet with the devil, became stronger and stronger

‘Wha, what is this?’

The white light shining from her kept getting stronger and at the end, the light turned silver. It was a brilliance like those of stars. KangYoon rubbed his eyes and looked again at the magnificence of the silver light which was incomparable to the white light he was satisfied with before.

“And kiss his mouth

To heart's desire,

And on his kisses

At last expire!”

Min JinSeo, who became immersed in acting stepped one step by step towards KangYoon. The silver light emitted to her surroundings were pervading him. The silver light which was stronger than the white light. KangYoon tapped his knees at the surprise.

‘Silver!! What... is this?! This... will absolutely work!!’

A light that surpassed silver was a first. Although he didn’t know the reason, KangYoon could be sure while looking at the power of the song. That this will definitely work!!

Although Min JinSeo was a study-worm, he never thought that her abilities were so high.

Eventually, the short one-man act ended soon. Min JinSeo seemed exhausted as she tumbled down onto the floor.

“Fua~. How was it?”

“You did well. This will do.”

“Should I do it once more?”

“No, it’s alright. Then work hard.”

He feared that he may be a distraction to her practice. KangYoon left the practice room and Min JinSeo focused in practice even after that.

‘Silver, it’s silver light. Is there a higher tier?’

While heading to the hall where the performance would occur, KangYoon deeply thought about his eyes which could only see white and grey lights until now.

The performance had come.

KangYoon stood next to the engineer staff. It was to watch the

girls in performance. He had installed 5 cameras in all directions as well. He planned to use the materials from the cameras for monitoring and as various other materials.

The event began by the girl who was called the prettiest within Angel's House. First, they lightened up the mood with a talent show from the Angel's House, and then there was a talent show from the villagers. Following that, the main event, the girls' performances had begun.

The first stage was with Han JooYeon and Ailee Jung. The two girls stood on the stage nervously.

"Hello. We're trainee Han JooYeon and Ailee Jung of MG Entertainment."

A loud cheer and applause erupted out. Then, the recording flowed out and the stage began. Han JooYeon was the one to step out first.

"Day by day – I get drunk in your fragrance —"

Han JooYeon's fulfilling voice caught the audience. The normal yet soft voice touched them comfortably and everyone could accept her comfortably.

The pitch became higher and it became Ailee Jung's turn.

"Finally — I lift my eyes and look at you —"

Ailee Jung's voice had power. The rough yet feminine powerfulness gave the people a positive impression and they all waved their bodies. Then, the pitch became higher little by little.

"Here —!!"

This was the first part that the two girls' tones had met. However, KangYoon's eyes while looking at the performance, became sharp.

'Grey?'

The fine white light had suddenly become grey. It wasn't slowly

either. When the two voices got together, it had become grey in an instant. Moreover, the tones he could hear with his ears were in disharmony. All the people including the kids at the front and even the villagers all creased their faces and the result also influenced the two girls.

‘It’s becoming darker.’

The grey light in KangYoon’s eyes became darker and darker until it eventually turned black. It was the worst. Even the solo parts, which had white lights at the beginning, became grey and didn’t recover.

‘It’s difficult to raise the atmosphere but it’s very easy to lower it.’

KangYoon sighed and the two girls on stage also drooped their heads. The girls had to come down the stage with their heads down without being able to look at the audience until the end.

“Ahaha... Thank you. The next stage is...”

The presenter also seemed difficult as she laughed awkwardly. The audience’s expression didn’t look that good. The effect of the first stage was that big. Han JooYeon, who sings well, had failed. The people’s impressions had become bad.

The most important stage in a performance, if it had to be chosen, is the first and the last. But as the first had screwed up, it was obvious that the following would be difficult as well.

‘Mr. KangYoon. Are you going to leave them like this?’

President Lee HyunJi asked worriedly. However, KangYoon shook his head.

‘Yes. it’s alright.’

‘Those girls will be hurt you know. If it’s serious, they might even get stage phobia.’

The hall for the performance was very small. Thanks to that, the

distance between the performers and the audience was very near. Meaning that all the live expressions of the audience can be seen by the performers. If they were rejected so outright, then as trainees, it won't be easy to overcome it.

President Lee HyunJi thought to go herself but she didn't. Such an intrusion of rights wasn't anything good. Moreover, she had the belief that KangYoon would do well.

“The next stage is...”

The next stage was Christie An's solo stage. Perhaps due to the screw up in the first stage, she was very nervous. As she was worried, when she came onto the stage, the people's gazes were unordinary.

‘Why are they like this?’

How much will you show us?

Everyone's eyes were saying this. The influence of the first stage was affecting Christie An just like that. To her, who stood on stage for the first time, this kind of look was not easy for her to bear. In the end, she even trembled her hands.

“Sing ~~~ fo ~~ sing— “

In the end, she showed a trembling voice along with an off-pitch. She felt like her 4 minutes of singing was eternity.

‘...She does well but it becomes grey.’

KangYoon, who was at the very back, felt the same. When he looked at the people, the students were chatting, and the adults were sighing and chatting and couldn't focus on the stage.

KangYoon was checking each and every one of these.

The next stage was a duet dance song with Jung MinAh and Seo HanYu. Fortunately, they were a little better. They just didn't even look at the audience and did their performance. However, the after-effects of not looking at the audience was big.

‘It’s white. They did quite well.’

To KangYoon, it came out as colors straight away. Jung MinAh and Seo HanYu were a well matched duet. The two matched each other well, and they didn’t tremble at the sight of the audience. However, they were lacking in bringing the mood up.

Then, it became Min JinSeo’s turn.

“That unni looks so pretty.”

When Min JinSeo came on stage, one of the kids pointed at her. No, a lot of the people didn’t point at her, but they weren’t much different from the kid. Their gazes were fixed on Min JinSeo’s beautiful and tall height. If the trainees that came out until now were cute and lively, then Min JinSeo, with the thin and tall height, cuteness, beauty and everything.

Min JinSeo looked towards KangYoon, seeming uncomfortable due to the gazes. KangYoon seemed to have understood as he smiled and nodded his head at the back. She lightly smiled and signalled. It was the start.

“if it is for thee... I would fain die today.”

Min JinSeo’s clear voice resounded throughout the hall. Like her flawless skin, it was a bright and clear voice. The people who were all chatting until now all started focusing on Min JinSeo.

When Min JinSeo spoke each of her lines, the light emitting from her pervaded the people. The pervaded light made the people smile, and bright. Also, some even teared up slightly. This was the influence of her stage.

The performance went in to climax, and she started singing. And she approached the audience. At the front of the male teacher at the front, Min JinSeo kneeled and shouted.

“And kiss his mouth

To heart’s desire,

And on his kisses

At last expire!”

Thump!!

The man felt like his heart stopped. It wasn't just because of Min JinSeo's pretty looks. Her realistic voice, emotion and everything had pervaded him. No, she had influenced all the audience around her.

‘It's silver!!’

The white light had become silver from some time. Min JinSeo was violently shaking everyone's emotions. As though everyone felt different emotions after looking at the performance, some covered their faces, some teared up, and some clenched their fists. Min JinSeo was shaking everyone.

It was short but Min JinSeo's performance which shook everyone's emotions ended like that.

“Thank you.”

“.....”

Min JinSeo politely bowed, but the people didn't recognize that the stage had ended. All the audience had become dumbfounded.

“Uwaaaaaaaah—!!”

“Noona, you're the best!!”

“Applause!!!”

A moment later.

The people who finally realized that the one-man act had ended applauded as if to bring down the hall. The sound of cheers made a wave. All the people couldn't leave her performance.

President Lee HyunJi, who was watching Min JinSeo from up front also slowly clapped. She finally understood why KangYoon played that soap opera for her. Min JinSeo was a jewel amongst

jewels. The playing around-like stages that the girls did until now all flew away with her stage alone. It was like a big wave washing away all remnants.

“The next is...”

Of course, even after Min JInSeo’s stage was over, the performance continued.

Lee SamSoon and Christie An’s duet was not bad. However, it being a foreign pop song had held them back. Even so, they could get some cheer from the people due to the remaining influence of the previous stage.

The problem was the dance song that everybody did. Although they all resolved themselves to do well...

‘Ah...’

Jung MinAh drooped her head when she saw Ailee Jung being late by half a beat, as she always did. Especially when they turned to the left, or when they moved to the left, she became off beat by half a beat. Thanks to that, everyone’s dance had become an amateur’s dance.

‘The last part is grey. It’s good that it isn’t black.’

KangYoon wrote down everything and closed his notes. At the same time, the performance had ended.

“Thank you.”

With those words from the girls, applause filled the hall. However, the girls couldn’t lift their heads as they thought about what happened on that stage.

After a performance ends, fatigue always finds them. Thanks to the long years of experience, KangYoon knew that better than anyone. Thanks to that, he didn’t tell them the feedback straight after the performance.

However, KangYoon broke that. Not even one hour after the

performance, he had called the girls into the hall where they had the performance.

“.....”

“.....”

The girls didn't say anything and kept their heads down. No, they couldn't say anything. KangYoon was also silent. KangYoon, who briefly kept the silence, calmly started talking.

“I will give you the feedback from now. Everyone sit.”

In principle, feedback was done with the trainers. But, all of a sudden, it was with KangYoon. The girls all solidified due to nervousness. Whether he knew that or not, KangYoon connected the camera to the projector and played the videos. Soon, the video on the girls' performances played.

While looking at Han JooYeon and Ailee's first performance, KangYoon spoke.

“First, JooYeon and Ailee. I won't mention things that you did well. I will only say the things that you lacked in. The part where the voices of the two of you meet, and its beginning parts, so that is the chorus. This part is lacking. You felt it, right?”

“Yes.”

“Then let's do it again. Stand up.”

Han JooYeon and Ailee Jung stood up and started singing. Again, KangYoon could see the light. It was the same grey light as before.

“Again. JooYeon. Are you listening to Ailee's voice?”

“Yes.”

“How about you, Ailee?”

“I'm listening.”

“You're listening to each other's. So why is the sound in complete disharmony?”

“.....”

KangYoon could realize straight away. They were in a fight of wits in the song. You match my voice. No, you match – A bit like this. He could have gotten angry, but KangYoon didn't.

“Again.”

“Yes.”

Until it was fine.

KangYoon had resolved like that. Whether they knew or not, the girls were complaining at Han JooYeon and Ailee who were having a voice fight.

“This won't do. Let's try again.”

The grey light from them was as ever. Neither Han JooYeon nor Ailee seemed like they had any intentions in listening to the other's voice and make a harmony. Although they repeated many times, the two didn't change.

“Again.”

KangYoon was stubborn. Although Ailee Jung and Han JooYeon who weren't giving way, could also be called stubborn, KangYoon was above them. Needless to say, he had shouted for them to repeat several tens of times. In the end, Ailee burst into tears saying she was exhausted, but KangYoon didn't even blink.

“Try again.”

“Sir...”

“You can just match each other's voice. Right, JooYeon?”

“.....”

Han JooYeon was also becoming fed up with the person called KangYoon. Although she didn't want to lose to Ailee, KangYoon was even scarier. Currently, he was showing them something that was above their imagination. Even the delinquent, Sedy, had to

kneel for 3 days according to what they heard, and now they were feeling the same thing with their own skin.

“We only did it 100 times. Let’s try again.”

Now that it came to this point, neither Han JooYeon nor Ailee couldn’t not match their voices. However, matching their voices wasn’t an easy task at all. Sound was something that’s difficult to match another sound. When one became a singer, they have the ability to match after listening just once, but these girls weren’t at that point yet.

“Again.”

In the end, the girls had to swim in nightmares for several tens of times again. However, they did get released.

“This sounds ok.”

“.....”

When they heard this line from KangYoon, they couldn’t even remember how many times they had tried. Whether it was Han JooYeon or Ailee Jung, they had pounded each other’s voices onto their body. They felt like they will absolutely never forget it again. KangYoon’s feedback was that horrifying.

“So next is Jung MinAh and Seo HanYu. Shall we?”

“Eek!!”

Jung MinAh showed too much of her emotion. However, the girls who would laugh it over normally also wouldn’t be able to laugh in this situation. Seo HanYu was the same.

In the end, these two also had to repeat the same movements to the point that KangYoon’s word, ‘again’, had been engraved onto their minds. Fortunately, they didn’t try as many times as the previous duo. Even so, it was still horrifying.

The feedback was applied to all stages. To solo stages to duet stages. KangYoon’s feedback was simple but for the girls, it was

horrifying. It was because he pinpointed the parts the girls didn't do well and made them repeat it. They were all so fed up with the repetition so the girls resolved that they will prepare meticulously, no matter what happens, in the future.

The girls went through suffering to the point of death, but the highlight was the last feedback, the group performance. This was the dance that looked like an amateur's due to the half beat difference between Jung MinAh and Ailee Jung.

The time was already 4 AM. Fatigue was piled up on both the girls' and KangYoon's eyes but KangYoon kept on with the feedback with red eyes.

"There's no way with the dance. You can only do it until it works. Let's do it."

Unfortunately, KangYoon didn't have any specialized knowledge in dances. However, now, he didn't require it. The ultimate objective of the current training was teamwork, since the teamwork for everyone to become one in the dance was very important. There was no way they could allow Jung MinAh being fast and Ailee Jung being slow like last time.

"MinAh, you match her."

"What? Then it would become loose..."

"Even so."

"...Yes."

Jung MinAh pouted as if she had a problem, but she didn't retort to KangYoon's words. KangYoon knew of Jung MinAh's pride very well. She danced 'too' well. Literally 'too' well. Thanks to that, Ailee couldn't keep up with her. In the end, it was better for her to match with Ailee's. Raising the pace after that slowly was a better method for them to raise their skills as a whole. That didn't mean that he told them that someone was absolutely in the wrong. It was KangYoon's way of respect.

Then this method brought out its effects.

“It’s become a little better. Let’s speed it up a bit.”

“Yes.”

Jung MinAh also seemed to have felt the change as she didn’t say anything. In dancing, she was very quick witted. The pace increased little by little. However, curiously, Ailee Jung, who couldn’t follow Jung MinAh’s pace until now, could now follow her fast pace, and in the end, she completely kept up with Jung MinAh’s pace.

The time was 10 past 7 in the morning. It was then when all the feedback had ended.

KangYoon finally made everyone gather.

“You’ve worked hard. Let’s wash up and sleep.”

“.....Thank you for your work.”

The girls who performed and squeezed out all their power throughout the night, could be said to be a zombie. Their eyes were drooping as much as possible, and their hair was all greasy.

At KangYoon’s disperse declaration, the girls all limped towards their rooms.

‘...It’s really tiring.’

As soon as the girls left, KangYoon fell on to the hall ground, and went into sleep like that. In truth, KangYoon was the most tired person.

On their way home after all the schedule was finished with the Angel’s House.

The 7 girls were heading home in a small voice. As no one sat at the front other than their manager, the girls could speak about anything they wanted.

“Sob... It was hell. Hell...”

Ailee Jung seemed to be frightened just by remembering as she trembled her body. As they all had the influence from the overnight practice, the dark circle on their eyes never disappeared.

“Who said it wasn’t... Lee KangYoon you bastard...”

Han JooYeon also spoke. She felt like she wouldn’t be able to endure without spouting a line. Perhaps due to the after-effect from yesterday, her voice was all trembling.

“...I always thought that Team Leader was the kindest but he’s the most strict... He was so scary...”

Seo HanYu also clattered her teeth when she thought about the training that she never wanted to think about again. As the feedback was more traumatizing than the performance itself, it was horrifying just by thinking about it.

“MinAh-unni can’t even open her eyes.”

“That’s true.”

Seo HanYu and Lee SamSoon showed pity when they looked at Jung MinAh who fell into sleep in a corner as soon as soon as she got on. In fact they were also tired, but they didn’t feel sleepy. They were very jealous of Jung MinAh who could sleep as soon as she rested.

“JinSeo must be good. You didn’t have a feedback.”

Christie An looked at Min JinSeo with envy filled eyes. Then, Min JinSeo shook her hand.

“No, I should have done it too, but I’m sorry.”

“No, if you did then only the time would have gotten longer. And didn’t you do well? Just when did your acting skills become so good? I was so surprised yesterday.”

Christie An’s words seem to have represented all the other girls’ hearts as they nodded. Min JinSeo said no and shook her head.

“Don’t lift me so high. It’s embarrassing. I just did as sir

KangYoon said.”

“JinSeo wou’ be fine if ya had yer debut now. I’m so envious.”

When Lee SamSoon spoke in a slow voice, Min JinSeo reddened her face even more and looked down. The girls burst into a laugh when they saw that and Min JInSeo became friendly with them like that.

While they were chatting, they were already at an expressway rest area.

The girls who bought lots of snacks including Hodugwaja, a famous snack in expressway rest areas, eventually fell into happiness. The bus eventually turned into a snack party with lots of cookie sounds.

“Hahahaha. And so...”

Of course, chatting was never excluded. But it was when the bus was about to depart. The door opened and KangYoon put his head in.

“Team Leader.”

Everyone solidified in position. Jung MinAh who was sleeping until then rubbed her eyes to see watch happening until she saw KangYoon, when all sleepiness flew away.

‘Argh!! What is this!!’

It was a secret(not) that her eyes became red.

“I came here since I have something to give you. Please talk about it on the way. JinSeo, you’re not related but I want you to give them help.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon handed out the papers and went back to his own car. The girls turned their eyes to look at the papers.

“Evergreen Orphanage Performance. In 3 days... Huh?!”

Ailee Jung was reading in a clear voice when she expressed her emotion for all to hear.

“Whoa... what is this?”

Han JooYeon wasn't that different. Another performance when they just did one... She felt like she will go crazy.

“Unni, look at this. ‘The contents will be the same as Angel's House. Min JinSeo's one-man act excluded’.”

Seo HanYu mentioned the important thing. The girls were all dumbly looking at each other's faces. In the end, this was a test.

“This iz a test. Our Team Leader shur has the talent to roll people around.”

Lee SamSoon spoke in her characteristic slow voice. In the last few days, she had felt the fright of KangYoon horrifyingly. It didn't just end with feedback. Now it was a test.

Jung MinAh stepped in then.

“We made up for what was lacking yesterday. It will be better than yesterday, right?”

Everyone nodded as they agreed. Han JooYeon spoke.

“Does the Team Leader not trust in us? Ailee, looks like we should show him our potential, right?”

“Of course, of course.”

Han JooYeon had become close to Ailee from some time. They had become close due to practicing together so hard. It wasn't just them. All the girls became close to their partners they practiced with yesterday. They had to become the heroes to defeat the demon lord known as KangYoon. Now that the 1st raid had ended and they were about to disperse, the 2nd gathering had occurred. The girls had to come together again.

“Let's show it properly this time. Let's shock that old man.”

“Whoa, Jung MinAh, acting like a leader now, eh?”

At Jung MinAh’s words, Christie An clapped. The rest of the girls all burst into laughter,

and like that, the inside of the bus started harmonizing with the talk about the performance. They still had a long way to go, but the girls started to have the thing called teamwork form while matching with each other.

3 days passed by in a flash.

The girls went into practice with one mind. Especially the parts that KangYoon pointed out, such as the harmony of Han JooYeon and Ailee’s voices, and the beat difference between Jung MinAh and Ailee – they all focused in those while practicing. The words KangYoon emphasized, to match with each other, was engraved in their bodies, and now, they could do it subconsciously.

The result of the practice came out now.

“Let’s do well.”

“Yes.”

The first in the sequence, Han JooYeon and Ailee Jung, embraced each other while wishing each other good luck and they stood on the stage. The harsh training made the non-existent comradery into real.

“Wow– a pretty unni.”

“Noona–”

Han JooYeon smiled at the girl who said she was pretty. Then, that child giggled even more. The mood became light and Ailee Jung flexibly lightened the mood with a simple joke. The Ailee Jung who was trembling, from Angel’s House was all but gone now.

“Let’s start.”

With Han JooYeon's declaration, the song started. With a recording, her voice started softly permeating throughout the audience.

-Day by day – I get drunk in your fragrance —

While Han JooYeon was doing her solo part, KangYoon was watching the stage from the back.

‘So the solo part doesn't have much of a difference.’

It was the same for Ailee Jung's part which came out next. However the problem originally lay in the chorus. The part where their voices became one was very different to last time.

“Here –!!”

This was the most important first part. Ailee Jung's low pitch and Han JooYeon's high pitch met properly. The strong harmony assaulted the audience.

‘Wait? What is this?!’

While their voices were harmonizing, KangYoon doubted his eyes.

Normally, he would see faint or strong white light.

‘Musical notes?!’

However, completely different to before, a blue colored musical note could be seen from the two girls.

Chapter 34: Awakening Of Silver Light (2)

‘No way... Musical notes!!’

It wasn't just musical notes that KangYoon could see. The musical notes coming out of the two fused and harmonized and finally became white light. A faint white light enveloped the entire stage. Perhaps it was even influenced by the small spotlight installed on the stage as the white light became stronger as well when the spotlight's light became stronger.

‘Huh... when was this ability so well defined...?’

Even amidst being puzzled, KangYoon calmly recorded the situation. The musical notes that came out of the singers, the influence of the stage devices, and the reaction of the audience, etc. – He needed to know all these. He was confused, but he had to cool-headedly judge the things that happened to him.

Although KangYoon was confused, he didn't avert his gaze from the girls. The girls on the stage already seemed to have gotten it on as the musical notes they produced was producing even stronger white light. The blue musical notes flowed out like fuel for the white light and as it did, the audience's reaction became better as well.

‘They will become a good combination.’

Putting aside his confusion, KangYoon wrote down the girls' performance.

‘Han JooYeon was stubborn-minded so she didn't even try to do the duet at all. However, now, we have another weapon in our arsenal.’

In KangYoon's 'past', Han JooYeon didn't try to mix her voice with anyone other than when she sang as a group. She didn't even allow an intra-group duet. Because of that, rumors such as her being a perfectionist and whatnot were endless. However, now,

with this stage, KangYoon had given her a weapon that she didn't have in his 'past.'

"I — love you — — — —"

The performance ended with Han JooYeon's high pitch and Ailee Jung's low pitch. Perhaps due to the lingering white light, the people all applauded loudly.

"Thank you!!"

Han JooYeon didn't even think that she would be cheered so loudly even though they did the same song as last time. Ailee Jung was already tearing up and sobbing.

"There, there."

"sob.."

Even though only one song had finished, Han JooYeon had to let go of her emotions quickly due to Ailee Jung. Han JooYeon hugged her and immediately left the stage through the back. Ailee Jung was too cute to hate.

"Well done, you did great!!"

The 4 girls, including Jung MinAh welcomed Han JooYeon and Ailee Jung. When they had a peek at the two's stage from time to time, it was incomparably better than the stage 3 days ago. It was a huge amount progress.

"Next!! Do your best!!"

Next was Christie An's solo stage. She elegantly smiled to the people who patted her back, and immediately stepped on stage.

'A blue musical note for slow songs, and yellow for fast ones. It's not [red paper blue paper](#)... Just how can I use this?'

(T/N: Red paper blue paper is a ghost story about haunted public toilet ghosts asking if someone wanted red or blue paper if there's no tissue left. Google 'red paper blue paper')

KangYoon thought that it might become different if he knew harmonics or musical theory. The only thing he could figure out now was that a song with a fast tempo, yellow notes would come out, and a song with a slow tempo, blue notes would come out, and that the density of the light that the musical notes would produce are different. Fortunately, he could see which part went well and which part didn't according to the density of the light.

'The density of the light was always constant. A good performance might appear if I touch the parts with weak light and other bits.'

KangYoon also organized the things about light on a different note while looking at the girls' stage.

On his note, he was writing down today's stage. Today, he couldn't find any grey in the stages. In both duets and solo stages, white light pervaded the stage.

"Teacher, I wanna be a trainee."

"You won't do. Cuz you're ugly."

"Wow, that's... blunt...."

Although there was a pitiful case where someone decided on their dream and got put down mercilessly, but the majority of the audience was immersed deeply in the performance.

'So this is the last one. This is the most important one though.'

Group performance. 'Sun Shine.'

No matter how well they did their previous stages, if they screw up this stage, KangYoon thought that it would be ruining the entire performance. The weight of the last stage, the teamwork of the 6 girls, etc. – There were a lot of things hanging on this stage.

With the presenter's last introduction, the girls stood on stage nervously. The stage costume which stuck on to their bodies attracted the people's gazes instantly.

Soon, the AR played and the performance started.

‘How would the lip-sync stage come out?’

There were a lot of lip-sync stages in TV broadcast stages. There were cases where some singers, who showed lively performances on stage, gave up singing live and put all their efforts into performing. Of course, there were also cases where they did that because their singing was not good enough.

KangYoon looked at the stage nervously, while wondering how the stage would look like in this case.

When Jung MinAh, who was in the center position, started moving slowly while waving her body, the other girls also started moving with her as the center. Then, light started being emitted from the girls. A red light was coming out from everyone.

Half a beat. When Jung MinAh turned to the left, Ailee Jung always strangely became a bit late by half a beat. At this moment, from Ailee, a violet light came out and not red. However, eventually, Ailee looked at her side and matched their movements. Then, the light changed to red.

‘Good.’

The light became one, and they were of one beat. No one showed any signs of being off time Jung MinAh signalled Ailee before she did a turn, and she purposefully slowed down her turning speed. Although it was a miniscule difference, this difference had produced the effect of matching everyone’s dance routine into one. KangYoon clenched his fists.

The light pervading the entire venue was a bright white light.

‘It might take some time to adapt to this.’

The color of singing, the color of dancing, the color when everything harmonized into one. The light that KangYoon could see had been subdivided. Although he now had more things to mind about, he also now had more things he could know. It

seemed time was needed for him to get used to it.

‘Let’s quickly get used to it.’

KangYoon resolved while looking at the girls finishing their performance.

Today, Mr. Choi headed to PC-bang as soon as school ended. His grades were average, his looks were ordinary, and everything about him was ordinary, but in this PC bang, he was a man who could be ahead of anyone. He was the best in computer games, searching and other things that had things to do with the computer.

“F*ck, do you know about SeasonS?”

“You idiot. Of course I do. They became big. HaNeul’s short hair... Oh, she can own me.”

“Damn you. A girl’s all about the body. HanNa da best.”

SeasonS, who became famous instantly with the department store performance video which was released through the internet, now were at the point where even TV stations had contacted them. The first on the popular search word list didn’t end prematurely and through the rumors on the internet, they became even more popular. They literally reverse-travelled. Thanks to that, whether it was President Yoon MoonSoo or SeasonS, they seemed like they would throw themselves into a pit of fire if KangYoon said so.

Of course, whether or not it was true, Mr. Choi topped up using a crumpled 1000 won note, and turned on the game. However, today, there was a lot of updates, and the monitor didn’t listen to him.

“This shitty monitor...”

While refreshingly swearing at the guiltless monitor, Mr. Choi opened the internet. Mr. Choi, who went to a portal site by directly skipping the PC-bang’s ad page, was about to put a word into the

search bar when he found a video at the bottom. It was a video about a game which was said to be highly looked forward to.

‘Shit, that looks so cool.’

After watching the game promotional video, he turned to look at the update, but it was still far from done. He got on the waves of videos and looked around various places. However, there was something which strangely caught his eyes.

-The girls who calls kisses.

Mr. Choi, who had the right(?) curiosity, and was full of vitality, immediately played the video. It was a click without hesitation.

The girl in the video was on a small stage. The camera slowly approached her and eventually closed up on her. However...

‘Fuck, so pretty.’

The girl’s face inside the video was flawless. The flawless skin and high nose, and big eyes to boot. She was giving off an aura of a goddess. Moreover, as she was around the same age as him, Mr. Choi felt his heart pounding the moment he saw her.

-And kiss his mouth

To heart’s desire,

And on his kisses

At last expire!!

The lips which called kisses, the girl was literally calling kisses. Unlike the provocative video title, the force that could be seen in the video was great. The girl in a fluttering white one piece was looking at him with pitiable eyes.

‘Ahh...’

Although it was only on the monitor, Mr. Choi was already blank minded from some time. When he was about to drool and his heart beat too loud...

-If you need a loan? The Gimme Money's team leader Kim MiYoung...

“Aaaaaaack!!!”

Fortunately, team leader Kim MiYoung had saved Mr. Choi. The shattering of fantasy was done in but an instant. Mr. Choi abruptly stood up due to the beautiful voice of team leader Kim MiYoung and received the gazes of the people around him. Mr. Choi tried his best to ignore the embarrassment, sat down, and played the video again.

-And kiss his mouth

To heart's desire,

And on his kisses

At las...

Without even making him forget about the embarrassment, Mr. Choi had spent all the topped up time in the PC-bang without even getting to play anything.

“Thank you for your work!!”

KangYoon received a lively call from the girls in front of Evergreen Orphanage. It was because KangYoon didn't look for them after the programme ended for them to feel the emotions they felt from the stage.

“You did well.”

KangYoon spoke shortly. There was nothing to say about today's performance. Of course, they would have to show him better in the future, but today, it was enough. KangYoon didn't speak long, and took out a card from his wallet.

“What is that?”

“That is ... the... the... company card?!”

When Han JooYeon asked, Jung MinAh shivered. Jung MinAh

requested KangYoon and held it for a brief moment, and it was a company card, which had a luxurious gold colored edge. She could tell that it was an expensive-looking card at a glance.

“Let’s go eat some beef.”

“Whaaaat?!”

The girls all shouted in surprise. They all knew that beef was expensive. When they seldomly had a get-together with the company people, the singers had beef, and the trainees often had pork. The quantity of pork they got was also small. It was because a singer and a trainee was clearly differentiated.

However, KangYoon was different. He was meticulously looking after his own people. KangYoon, who seduced all the girls with beef, headed towards a beef barbeque shop which used top quality beef, which was outside the city.

As he had already reserved beforehand, KangYoon and company had spacious seats. When they arrived, meat arrived, and with a grilling sound, the meat started getting grilled.

“Uaa... I can’t hold it anymore!!”

Ailee Jung was restless with her chopsticks as she kept picking it up and putting it down repeatedly and also tried to take the meat, but Jung MinAh did her best to hold her back. It was because KangYoon was there. The adult hadn’t even lifted his spoon, so it was rude to start eating. With her gaze, everybody had let go of their cutlery.

“Eat quickly. You must be hungry.”

“Yes!!”

Frighteningly, as KangYoon spoke that, the meat started disappearing fast. The staff became busy to procure the meat to replace the ones that disappeared. KangYoon had already requested them to refill as the meat ran out. The appetites of girls of age were frightening.

When the girls started eating, KangYoon also picked up his chopsticks. However, his phone started dancing.

“Hello? Yes, President.”

However, as it was a not-so-welcome call, his hand that held the chopsticks stopped. It was a call from President Lee HyunJi.

-Team Leader Lee, where are you right now?

“We’re eating. Is there anything?”

-Is that so. I’m sorry for interrupting you, but can you please come back to the office as soon as possible?

“So it’s difficult over the phone. I understand.”

After ending the call, KangYoon stood up from his seat. The girls were alright as there were other employees and managers could take them back.

“Team Leader, are you going already?”

KangYoon was about to pay and leave quietly when Jung MinAh followed him.

“The company called me. Go and eat.”

“Is something up? You didn’t even eat properly.”

“MinAh can eat my share.”

“Of course I will. Here, say ‘ah’.”

“Huh?”

KangYoon opened his mouth without thinking when Jung MinAh shoved something inside his mouth. It was a lettuce wrap with a lot of meat.

“De’ishus.” (Delicious)

“Of course, who do you think made it?”

“En’oy yer mea’.” (Enjoy your meal)

“Speak after you’re done chewing.”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders and patted Jung MinAh's shoulders. Then, he headed to the parking area.

‘The wrap is good.’

Inside KangYoon's mouth, the suitable amount of garlic, sauce, and meat was mixed with a suitable ratio and they added to the savoriness of the meat. KangYoon smiled when he thought about Jung MinAh who thought about him.

By car, it didn't take that long for him to arrive at the company. KangYoon had experience being a manager so he was good at driving as well. KangYoon neatly parked the car inside the parking area and immediately headed to the President's office.

“Welcome.”

Although it was already late, President Lee HyunJi hadn't left work and was waiting for KangYoon. The outside was already dark and the moon was rising.

“Is there something important?”

“One good thing, one bad thing. Now, which one do you want to listen to first?”

“I will start from the bad one.”

KangYoon wanted to enjoy the good thing after quickly passing the bad thing. President Lee HyunJi calmly spoke after hearing him saying that.

“Team Leader Lee has too much work. Transfer Min JinSeo to our department. A lot of the directors are requesting this. Laughable people, aren't they? They are all asking if Team Leader KangYoon is the only one who's a planner inside MG Entertainment.”

“Min JinSeo was an actress aspirant who everyone had left behind. I only let her spread her talent.”

“You're right. Let me first talk about the good thing before going

into that. The good thing is that the internet video, ‘The girl who calls kisses’, that you uploaded onto the internet is receiving an amazing reaction from the internet. No, it can’t just be called amazing. It has gotten over 2 million views in just one day. The reporters keep contacting us as well. The article is not out yet. She didn’t even have her debut, but she has already spread her name around, eh.”

After listening to one good thing and one bad thing from President Lee HyunJi, KangYoon fell into thought. She meant that flies were gathering since Min JinSeo showed potential for becoming big, and that Min JinSeo’s foundation for debut was properly set in stone.

“So, the reason you’ve called me must be due to the time.”

“Yes. If we drag it anymore, the directors will devise strategies to whisk Min JinSeo away from you, Team Leader KangYoon. Especially, director Jung HyunTae is looking for an opportunity with all his might. Of course, I will stop him, but Team Leader Lee interfering with the acting department is controversial and can be said to be an invasion of rights. Team Leader Lee had excavated Min JinSeo and until now, you’ve shown great achievements in the company, so they can’t say anything now but... Later, Team Leader Lee’s voice in the company may decrease. Personally, I don’t want that to happen when I consider the future.”

President Lee HyunJi’s words sounded difficult, but in the end, she meant KangYoon to show results as soon as possible and tell the directors bluntly – ‘I achieved this since I’m so capable’. Because then, there won’t be anyone who could touch him.

KangYoon smiled after he heard President Lee HyunJi’s story to the end.

“You don’t have to worry about it, President.”

“What do you mean?”

“All of the preparations are ready. I will make it so that you don’t have to worry about the things related to Min JinSeo from now on.”

President Lee HyunJi tilted her head when she saw KangYoon’s confidence, but she soon nodded her head. KangYoon has always exceeded above her expectations until now, and he made her look forward to it even more. She firmly believed that KangYoon was trying to show her something this time as well.

Chapter 35: The Girl Who Calls Kisses (1)

For the first time in a while KangYoon went home early after finishing work. After the performance, it was an early leave he hadn't had for a long time.

HeeYoon greeted him delightfully after he arrived at home by the hell-train.

"Oppa-nim, did you have a safe trip?"

"Yeah, did you go to the hospital?"

"Of course."

KangYoon asked HeeYoon about the hospital as soon as he arrived. She of course said she did, patted KangYoon's shoulder and led him inside. KangYoon was also relieved since his sister's face became brighter and looked like she had a good life. Even so, KangYoon still wanted for HeeYoon to have a kidney transplant as soon as possible, and wanted her to live as she wanted to. This was a wish that was always there in the corner of his heart.

After dinner, he would originally read the newspaper or have a conversation with HeeYoon, but today, he had something to do. KangYoon, who rested for a while at home, simply organized his hair and left home.

"Don't drink too much."

"You too, HeeYoon, go to sleep early. Don't forget to lock the door."

KangYoon reminded HeeYoon and left. It was a time when everyone else would have gone to sleep. KangYoon also wanted to rest, but he headed towards the place he had promised.

'Is this it?'

The place KangYoon arrived at while looking at the rough map was a small bar. Although the building was small, it looked very

neat and the lighting was pretty.

‘Eh?’

When he entered, a woman wearing a one piece was tilting her glass. The problem was that there was no one other than her and the bartender in the bar.

“Hey, KangYoon!!”

The woman waved her hand as soon as she saw KangYoon. KangYoon sat next to her after he saw the woman’s thick hands.

“Did you rent the whole place again?”

“I hate to be disturbed.”

“You’re the same as always.”

“Someone who’s earned a lot should spend a lot, shouldn’t they?”

The woman shrugged her shoulders. At that time, he could see her full neck moving. She was huge to the point that a passersby would look at her once, but KangYoon didn’t seem at all flustered as he received a glass and clanged it with hers.

“It’s been a while, KangYoon. Hi.”

“Me too, TaeJin-noonim is as always.”

“What? Am I still pretty?”

“I don’t think that’s true.”

“If you’re so blunt, then it will be hard for you to get married, you know?”

KangYoon bluntly dissed her, but she only laughed and didn’t say much. Of course, saying that she was ‘pretty’ when her arms were thicker than his own, was a bit awkward.

Her name was Song TaeJin. As a drama writer who was on a roll nowadays, she was a writer who was famous as a romantic drama writer. As KangYoon was acquainted with her from his manager

days, their relationship had continued until now.

“My sister isn’t even cured yet, and you think I’m thinking about marriage?”

“You’re as always. You siscon. Just who lives like you nowadays? Such a loser.”

“Isn’t there one here?”

“Lunatic.”

He could have gotten angry, but KangYoon seemed used to this as he laughed it out. To him, these were words he were used to. Although her words were violent, KangYoon just ignored it and continued conversing with her.

The private conversation kept going for a while. Writer Song TaeJin seemed delighted to meet KangYoon as she kept talking without rest. Most of it was about the industry. Talks about the PD saying that the structure of the setting will be difficult after receiving the scenario to the talks about how would we put any PPL (Product Placement, it’s basically advertising) here and they fought and whatnot, she kept going on about her experience.

KangYoon listened in to her talks while filling her glass as the things she talked about contained a lot of important things about the entertainment industry.

“KangYoon, what’s the reason you wanted to meet me today? I wanted to meet my boyfriend today.”

Writer Song TaeJin blushed. Unfortunately, it wasn’t that pleasant to look at. However KangYoon just accepted it.

“Did I interrupt?”

“It’s not like that but... well, if it’s KangYoon who’s calling me, then I should come. It was you who called me, right?”

“If you think that way, then I’m thankful. In fact, I came here to ask you to recruit a person from me.”

“A request?”

Writer Song TaeJin made an ‘that’s unexpected’ expression. ‘KangYoo? You want to?’ – she was making such an expression. Although she was a well-off writer, there was no history of her recommending someone for a drama or used her powers to do so. Although there were a lot of times where she was requested, she only wrote scenarios as she wanted to and came up with the actor/actress’s image also all by herself. She said she didn’t want to be influenced by anyone and didn’t listen to anyone.

“That’s rare. Did you come here after hearing something?”

“I have a good one amongst my kids. You will like her very much.”

However, unlike KangYoon’s words, her expression wasn’t that good. Disappointment colored her face.

“...Well, it’s from you so let’s have a look at least.”

She didn’t look that expectant. Even at that reaction, KangYoon searched around his bag and took out a laptop without changing his expression.

“It seems like you came prepared, eh? You even brought a laptop.”

“Of course. You will like her.”

“Well, whatever.”

I will let you go this once since it’s you – or so was her expression. She would have abruptly stood up and left if it was anyone else other than KangYoon.

KangYoon played the video. Soon, a video about a girl played. It was a video about a girl doing a one-man act.

“She’s that girl? The one on the internet?”

“Yes.”

“I know this girl... kiss... Oh, The Girl who Calls Kisses!”

Writer Song TaeJin also knew of the video which was a hot topic nowadays. For a writer, it was very important to know the latest trend. Not only internet, she had to look through books and other trivial knowledge. There was no way she wouldn't know about the video, 'The Girl who Calls Kisses', which was sweeping all over the internet.

“Huh, KangYoon. You're saying that you want to give her to me?”

“Yes.”

“HAHAHAHAHAHA!!”

She laughed heartily. As there wasn't anyone around them, the laughter resounded loudly. When the laughter echoed and filled the place, KangYoon gulped. This was the most important moment.

‘The drama that this noonim writes around this time is ‘Whispers of the Stars’. The role that she needs the most in that drama is the little sister of the male MC. Although there are a lot of child actresses, their ability for acting and their images will become a problem. A lovely yet young, and someone who provokes the protective hearts of the people – she should be thinking a lot about who to use for this role. Min JinSeo fits exactly in that role. This will definitely work.’

Of course, just because he knew the ‘future’ it wasn't that he hadn't researched at all. He gathered information and he came here since he had the confidence.

‘Whispers of the Stars’ was a good drama which had a record of 29% of viewer ratings. In KangYoon's ‘past’ Min JinSeo had once confessed that she was disappointed that she had failed the audition for ‘Whispers of the Stars’. Although it recorded a high percentage of viewer ratings, the flaw in the jade was the little

sister of the male protagonist. An actress called Park HaNee took the role but although she didn't have anything wrong with her looks, her acting was bad and criticisms were everywhere, and people even changed channels because of her.

Song TaeJin who thought for a while calmly started replying.

“KangYoon, are you sniping my preferences or something?”

“Do you like her?”

“Ha... Seems like requests are good once in awhile too. It's not a request for a main character, right?”

“Of course, it doesn't matter where.”

“Wow. What are you going to do if I put her in the extras?”

“Ayy. You aren't someone who will throw a jewel at a pig.”

Although Song TaeJin looked sassy on the outside, she was inwardly delighted. Although she didn't say anything, she had already finished calculating which role Min JinSeo would be good at. Although she had no problems with the actors that were casted, she was disappointed with only the little sister role of the male protagonist. However, KangYoon had brought her Min JinSeo, so she felt very refreshed. There was nothing to speak about her looks, and she even had the acting ability that seduces other people instantly so... If it was such an actress, there was no way she wouldn't welcome her.

“Good, good. Just tell her to come to me. Even if I go bankrupt I will definitely put her in, definitely!!”

“Don't go bankrupt, you need a lot of money for your dates, don't you?”

“HAHAHAHAHA!!”

Song TaeJin laughed heartily. She felt very refreshed now that her worries were solved just like that. She felt that the drink she had after that tasted very sweet.

“But were you in charge of actors? You only did singers, didn’t you? I heard you were on a roll these days.”

“It’s just this once. I should only do singers from next time.”

“Hoo, so it’s like that, this girl’s that good? To the point that KangYoon was distracted?”

KangYoon smiled and nodded. As he knew Min JinSeo’s future, KangYoon could be sure. That Min Jinseo would become huge if Min JinSeo grew well like this.

“Okay, okay. I will do my best. Well then, let’s drink, drink!!”

“...Oh, stop it... I have to go to work tomorrow.”

“Drink up. This is a drink from your noonim.”

It was past midnight.

KangYoon felt like dying as he had to drink the whole bottle that Song TaeJin gave him.

MG Entertainment regular board of director’s meeting.

There was an especially hot issue today, so the directors were heating up.

“We acknowledge Team Leader Lee KangYoon’s ability. However, Min JinSeo is an actress. The method to raise a singer and the method to raise an actor is different and even the marketing methods are different. Even for Team Leader Lee KangYoon, we wish that Min JinSeo would be taken care of by another person.”

Director Yu GyungTae brought up the topic. His characteristic traits were his small height and glasses. Then, the other directors also raised their hands and shouted.

‘As expected...’

President Lee HyunJi shook her head. She seemed to have already expected this.

“Topic acknowledged. Please speak.”

When the topic was acknowledged, Director Kim JinHo started speaking. He had experience of being turned down by Chairman Won JinMoon after he submitted a report when he was in charge of the Japan debut project. Thanks to that, there was no way he would have any good will towards KangYoon who succeeded the project.

“Originally, MG Entertainment took care of singer trainees and actor trainees separately. Marketing was the same, but as Team Leader Lee KangYoon started the girl group project and even put his hands on Min JinSeo, the existing order was breached. He spread his hands to the acting department even though he was in charge of the concert team on top of the next generation girl group. So even the trainees are confused at this. At this rate, the order we’ve built up until now may collapse.”

Director Kim JinHo linked a small reason to a huge collapse. Strictly speaking, it was just about their interests but to them, it was something they could use as a flaw. Min JinSeo and the other girl group trainees were a target of envy for the other trainees as they received such a deferential treatment, and there were even talks about going straight to debut if you catch KangYoon’s eyes. Things about ‘order’ wasn’t complete nonsense.

Director Lee HanSeo followed his words in agreement.

“Moreover, he has a higher budget use than the original rookie projects. Although it’s only going past the initial stages into the mid stages, his use of budget is as much as the entire project for other projects. Although it’s true that Team Leader Lee KangYoon has the ability, isn’t such a use of budget an breach of authority?”

The directors were on a roll. They all hated the fact that KangYoon, who raised President Lee HyunJi’s strength, had raised his voice within the company and had a relationship of trust with the Chairman himself. They were even worried about him getting

some shares of the company and becoming an executive. They all jumped into the opportunity and tried to pull out his roots.

When the directors kept commenting about KangYoon, Chairman Won JinMoon quietly raised his hand. At that time, everyone became silent.

“How about we hear from the person himself?”

The directors all agreed. They, who were like grains of sand, got together in front of the enemy known as KangYoon. Their power of unity was frightening in front of profit.

Chairman Won JinMoon’s secretary contacted KangYoon and the director’s meeting paused for a while.

“Chairman, will it be alright?”

President Lee HyunJi carefully asked Chairman Won JinMoon, who was smoking alone in the Chairman’s office. Although she had heard that KangYoon was already preparing something, there was no way she wouldn’t be worried.

“President Lee.”

“Yes, Chairman.”

“I’m neutral. I’m on no one’s side. You know that, right?”

“I do, but, this is a breach of rights.”

Due to a stone from outside, the stones on the inside were making noises. (T/N: consider ‘stones’ as ‘influence’, it’s a modification of a saying in Korean) President Lee HyunJi shook her head saying this wasn’t right, but Chairman Won JinMoon was cold.

“Didn’t you say that Team Leader Lee also knows of this already? In fact, he did rise suddenly. The Japan project, concert team, rookie project, and even an actress now. Who wouldn’t feel threatened? If I was a director, even I would feel threatened. Of course, if it was me, I would make him an ally.”

The KangYoon that Chairman Won JinMoon knew of, wasn't so narrow-minded. The KangYoon he knew was a person with principles. If someone didn't go against his principles, then he would become an ally of anyone. The directors looked like they didn't know of this fact.

"He's about to come, right?"

"Yes, Chairman."

"Let's go."

When it was about time for KangYoon to arrive from his work outside, Chairman Won JinMoon and President Lee HyunJi went down to the meeting room again. When they did, KangYoon had already arrived and was waiting for them.

"Hello."

"You're here? I'm sorry when you're so busy."

"It's nothing, Chairman."

KangYoon greeted everyone including Chairman Won JinMoon and stood at the front. As if they had waited for it, the directors immediately started attacking.

"Team Leader Lee, I'm sorry for making you come, when you're so busy. The reason we've called you today is to solve a few of our suspicions."

"Suspicious? Suspicious means that you're doubting me. Did I do anything that aroused your doubt?"

KangYoon wasn't suppressed at all even when Director Jung HyunTae tried to suppress him with his first strike. He should have been frightened as he was in front of the top echelons of the company, but KangYoon didn't look like that at all. Director Jung HyunTae bit his lips and in the end, coughed awkwardly.

"Hmhm... Okay, it seems there was a problem with my word selection. Please answer my questions."

“I understand, please speak.”

“First, it’s about the budget. The budget used in the girl group project until now...”

Director Jung HyunTae attacked in one spot why such a high budget was used while showing the budget used until now. KangYoon even wrote some things down and listened to the questions.

‘So it’s no different from a court hearing.’

Well-off people would receive jealousy from others. While achieving things, KangYoon had prepared for these jealousy while continuing to achieve success. Working meticulously and investing a lot of time had also something to do with this. KangYoon heard the entire question and started replying calmly.

“There are three reasons why the budget is higher than the original singers. First, you have mentioned ‘same period’, but that was in 2004. The prices are different from then. Even when investing the same amount of money, there’s no helping the difference in budget. Second, it’s the difference in numbers. Our members are 6 people. At that time, it was 3. It’s obvious that there should be differences. Third is that unlike in the past, there are a lot of things to prepare now. At that time, we didn’t invest in areas such as TV shows. However, now we have to invest in various areas such as TV shows, and foreign languages. I think I have answered your question. And above all...”

After collecting his breath, he calmly spoke.

“I only proceed with the budget after getting the approvals from the directors, the president and the chairman. As we have to invest in various areas, I have mentioned that I requested for a lot of budget. The directors here have also signed it. These are the proof.”

KangYoon handed out the papers he prepared to everyone. There

were papers about the required topics and budget papers. And they were all signed by all the people there. The approvals happened quickly as he had just succeeded a project and people wanted to push him more.

The directors' faces turned red in an instant. This was a victory from meticulous preparation.

Director Jung HyunTae didn't even pull out what he put in and sat down quickly. No, he couldn't even lift his head. In the end, he had scolded a subordinate employee without even checking that he himself had approved it, so he was very embarrassed. The directors who agreed also awkwardly coughed and consoled their embarrassment.

However, there were a lot of directors. There were some who were shameless. It was Director Moon GwangShik.

"As always, Team Leader Lee KangYoon is meticulous. We just wanted to confirm since we were worried that so much budget was used. As it's going well, then all is well. Thank you for confirming it with us."

"Not at all."

Although he was shameless, KangYoon didn't comment on it. The important thing now was the next question.

"The thing I want to ask you now is about the acting team. Team Leader Lee is in charge of the concert team and the singer team, right?"

"That is correct, Director."

"Then what will happen to trainee Min JinSeo? As far as I know, you're in charge of the concert team and the singer team, but doesn't Min JinSeo belong to the acting team?"

Min JinSeo is not under your jurisdiction so stop sticking your nose in, and give her to me – was his meaning.

‘So he’s getting greedy now that she looks like she’ll become big.’

KangYoon could see greed from Director Moon GwangShik. Min JinSeo was really something. Although they all knew through KangYoon, they had enough judgement to know. The fact that Min JinSeo’s video kept attracting attention and will attract even more after her debut.

“Min JinSeo is also someone under me right now.”

“Two isn’t easy and you’re doing three? I feel that you’re too greedy about work, Team Leader Lee. Overwork always calls for mistakes.”

Director Moon GwangShik stared at KangYoon. He never knew that KangYoon would be so blunt. The other directors were the same. They all whispered to each other and only when President Lee HyunJi stepped in, was the whispering stopped.

When the directors calmed down, Director Moon GwangShik snorted and spoke.

“Then what is the reason you have to be in charge of the acting team? Even while you have to disrupt company order.”

“First, I will talk about why the company order. I want to ask just which part of company order I have disrupted. Was I biased towards someone? I meticulously selected within the company system and selected according to the company standards. I have submitted all my selection standards with a report. I can give you another one right now.”

“Aren’t the rumors rising because of the selection process? It’s because the kids are getting jealous of the selected p..”

“Then should I even look after the jealous children? [One has a stomach ache if one’s cousin buys land](#) but it’s not like I can control how other people thinks.”

(T/N: This is a saying in Korean, basically means being jealous of others being good)

Director Moon GwangShik had nothing to say. When he thought about it, there wasn't a time when KangYoon breached the company system or treated it with contempt. Even when selecting Min JinSeo, they went through a confirmation process. If, Min JinSeo didn't have the talent to strike a hit, then would she have called such a huge wave on the internet? Not at all. KangYoon had already organized this into a report and submitted it and the directors had also seen this.

KangYoon calmly continued.

"It is true that there's an element of breach of authority on the acting team. However, I have already asked for permission beforehand, and have the approval from the Chairman."

When KangYoon looked towards Chairman Won JinMoon, he nodded his head. To think that Chairman Won JinMoon had approved, even so, Director Moon GwangShik desperately found some words to say.

"Even so, wouldn't efficiency drop if you do 3 work at once? Then the quality of work will drop, and if that happens..."

"I was also worried about that. I thank you beforehand that Director has thought so much about me."

While Director Moon GwangShik was questioning, KangYoon turned his gaze to everyone.

"However, I won't look after trainee Min JinSeo for long. Since she will have her debut soon. From now on, she won't be a trainee but an actress."

"WHAT?!"

"I'm looking at about one month. I had judged that it will be better for me to suffer for a bit during that time rather than giving it to another person. As it's an important period, I will take care of her just until she stabilizes after her debut and I'm planning for a take over after that."

At KangYoon's words, everyone became surprised and widened their eyes

Chapter 36: The Girl Who Calls Kisses (2)

“Debut? What do you mean by that?”

Director Moon GwangShik frowned as he couldn't understand. However, KangYoon didn't panic and calmly told them.

“I received a call yesterday morning. Min JinSeo was officially casted for a drama called ‘Whispers of the Stars’ of SBB TV station as the little sister of the protagonist.”

KangYoon's words were literally a bolt out of the blue to the directors. They thought to steal Min JinSeo from KangYoon and make her debut to increase their voice within the company without spending much, but to think she would debut already wasn't something they had thought about at all.

“Hmhm... No, but a debut already? No, did Min JinSeo show something?”

Director Moon GwangShik's tone changed in an instant. However, KangYoon continued without a single ripple.

“It was originally a possibility, but her skills have increased to the point that she passed the audition now.”

“Oh...”

Director Moon GwangShik was dumbfounded. He had never even thought that KangYoon's trump card would be the debut. Debut was a huge thing within the company. It could only be proceeded with the President's, Chairman's, and the Directors' approval. However, he never thought that KangYoon would proceed with it this fast.

Everybody was dumbfounded. At this moment, the insulted Director Yu GyungTae abruptly stood up from his seat.

“Team Leader!! Are you ignoring us board of directors?! What do you mean debut? To think you've decided on something so

important by yourself!!”

Although his shout resounded across the meeting room, no one stopped him. The directors were all of one mind. Now they had found the flaw.

“You should be prepared, no matter how...”

“Wait.”

While the director’s were growling, President Lee HyunJi stopped them. Fire burned in the director’s’ eyes, but she just gestured them to calm down and spoke.

“An audition without the approval of the directors... Team Leader Lee. This can be used as a cause for punishment.”

“Entering an audition is punishable, eh?... Then, are you saying that I should wait for the directors even though such a big opportunity had appeared?”

KangYoon clicked his tongue. The directors all shouted at him, but he was firm.

He also knew the reason why President Lee HyunJi talked to him like that. As President Lee HyunJi spoke reprimandingly to KangYoon, who the directors considered as one of hers, nobody could interfere easily.

“So you say there’s a clear reason. Please talk about it. That which you call an ‘opportunity’.”

President Lee HyunJi stopped the growling directors and asked KangYoon for the reason. It was a meticulous timing. The directors also urged KangYoon to speak. Although they found it strange that President Lee HyunJi didn’t take KangYoon’s side, when she was on the same side as he, now that they were going to listen to the so called ‘reason’, they became delighted.

KangYoon confronted the gluttons that were about to devour him whole from all sides, but he was calm.

“The audition was 2 days ago. It was a sudden audition. I judged that this drama had to be done no matter what the cost. I judged that there was no better role for Min JinSeo than this. However, as you know, the board of director’s meeting was today morning. There was too little time to report, since the audition was right in front of my nose.”

KangYoon’s words were like cogwheels. Cogwheels that matched exactly. If something became off, then the entire thing would collapse, but it was hard to find it. Director Yu GyungTae thought for a moment before asking.

“...Let’s take 100 steps back and let’s say what you said is true. As you said, the audition itself isn’t a problem. But a debut? This is a completely different problem which needs approval. Yes, just what kind of piece is it that you’re even saying all those things? Although I know that it’s on the public TV, but not all public TV programmes guarantee viewer ratings. Even if we get viewer ratings, that doesn’t mean a specific actor will be in the spotlight either. Please speak.”

Just how important of a role is it for you to proceed even while ignoring the directors? – was what he meant. KangYoon could feel that the answer to this question would be the most important.

KangYoon calmly started speaking.

“The drama that Min JinSeo will appear on, ‘Whispers of the Stars’ was written by Writer Song TaeJin, and produced by Producer Joo SeongHwan. The combination of the two is already famous for a stable viewer rating.”

“Oh...”

Director Yu GyungTae also knew well of Writer Song TaeJin and Producer Joo SeongHwan. Especially, Writer Song TaeJin’s dramas was a genre that people selected as one of the best amongst romantic dramas. If a rookie appeared in such a drama, then it was literally a jackpot.

“Y...yes, then what role is she?”

“She takes the role of the little sister of the male protagonist. She’s a little sister who’s weak, but strong willed and caring of her brother. I ask your forgiveness as it wasn’t because that I ignored the directors but judged that this will be the best stage for Min JinSeo’s debut and acted hurriedly on my own accord.”

KangYoon had nothing to speak anymore. No, not only that, even the directors couldn’t provoke him anymore. Such a stage, if he moved for the actress, then it was laughable to say that it was wrong to skip the director’s meeting to enter the audition and debut. To say that he ignored the process, the results were too big. Also, it wasn’t like he ignored the process entirely, so they couldn’t say anything about it. The directors only whispered to each other, but couldn’t point their arrows towards KangYoon anymore.

Originally, they had failed in their attempts to acquire a piece from Writer Song TaeJin. So instead, it was appropriate for them to praise KangYoon who acquired a role from such a piece. Even if there were low viewer ratings, just the fact that Min JinSeo acquired experience in Writer Song TaeJin’s drama would get her acknowledged. It was such a strong line in an actor/actress’s career.

“...Let me sum it up.”

The one to break the silence was Chairman Won JinMoon.

“The fact that Team Leader KangYoon hurried isn’t a good thing. Please take care from now on.”

“I understand, I will take care from now on.”

At Chairman Won JinMoon’s words, the directors inwardly sung in delight. His words contained weight. Since it was no different from saying that KangYoon had made a mistake. However, words had to be listened to the end.

“And Team Leader Lee will take care of Min JinSeo for a while.”

“Chairman!!”

Director Yu GyungTae shouted but when Chairman Won JinMoon gave him a stare, he lowered his head.

“Is there anyone in this place who can give me results like Team Leader Lee? If you do, please step up. I will leave Min JinSeo to that person.”

“.....”

Nobody could say anything. There was no one who, like KangYoon, dug up Min JinSeo, make her appear on a big stage, and even debut. Although MG Entertainment was an exceptional company in raising singers, they were no different from newbies in regards to actors and actresses. In fact, although a debut could be said to be the start for an actor, for MG Entertainment it was a big achievement.

“Team Leader Lee. Thank you for your work. And sorry to call you when you were so busy.”

“Not at all, Chairman.”

“In the future, I will try not to call you as much as possible unless we need you. The issues you bring up will be processed by me and President Lee HyunJi directly. As I saw it today, it seemed there were quite a few which needs urgent approval, and the directors won’t be suspicious anymore, isn’t that right, you guys?”

“.....”

The directors all became [honey-drunk mutes](#). As of now, none of them could say anything. They were embarrassed and insulted. Today was a bad day for the directors.

(T/N: A saying in Korean, basically they were speechless)

“Then please go quickly, Team Leader Lee. I held up a busy person for too long.”

“Then I’ll take my leave.”

KangYoon bid farewell to Chairman Won JinMoon and the directors and left right away. The directors all trembled in anger while looking at his back, but they couldn't take anymore action.

After KangYoon left, Chairman Won JinMoon stood up and took off his suit jacket.

“GungTae, HyunShik, GwangShik. Why don't you guys come talk with me for a bit? The meeting today will end here.”

“.....”

Other than the 3 directors who were called, the other directors all left the meeting room like tide.

Then a moment later...

“Hey, you *****!! Didn't I say so much to not hurry... Piiiiiiii, you Piiiiiiii Piiiiiiii”

“””...I'm sorry!!”””

Chairman Won JinMoon's refreshing words resounded across the corridor, passing through the gaps in the meeting room.

“Th... this is...!!”

Min JinSeo's arms shivered while receiving the script from KangYoon. On the front page of the script, ‘Whispers of the stars, episode 1 & 2.’ was written in big letters. She seemed unbelieving as she rubbed her eyes again and again; and picked up and put down the script again and again.

“This is not a dream right? I won't wake up suddenly, right?”

“I'll tell you beforehand that this is no dream. Next week's the recording so learn it by heart by then, okay?”

“Ah...”

It's not a dream, it's not!!

Min JinSeo's eyes quivered. KangYoon grinned looking at Min JinSeo being so touched by the word ‘debut’. Feeling such full

emotions like this was a good point for an actress.

KangYoon was about to leave to give her more time to practice. But then...

“JinSeo.”

“Sir, thank you, thank... Thank you so much, than... Thank you... Hic...”

Min JinSeo suddenly embraced KangYoon from the back. KangYoon panicked when he felt her body temperature from his back. However, without even being able to stop her, Min JinSeo buried her face in KangYoon’s wide back.

“I thought it was a lie. The words that you said that you would make me an actress, the debut as well. However, [sir](#) has done them all. Really... [sir](#) is my savior. Thank you, thank you so much...”

(T/N: Min JinSeo calls KangYoon ‘SeonSaeng’ (=sensei in JP), the closest translation would be ‘sir’)

“This is just the beginning.”

KangYoon teared off Min JinSeo’s hands wrapping him and turned back. Then, he stroked her now messy hair lightly.

“Let’s do this.”

“Yes!! It’s the first time I’ve seen someone like sir. I will definitely...”

“Definitely?”

“...I’m not going to say it.”

“Hey, so cold now?”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders, pat her shoulders, and left the practice room. He meant for her to practice hard.

‘So cool... Oh, what am I...’

Min JinSeo absentmindedly looked at KangYoon’s back for a while and she shook her head and started reading the script. From

now on, she had to practice harder.

An ordinary afternoon.

President Lee HyunJi headed to the Chairman's office with the papers that KangYoon gave her.

"...Such detailed data. He's an amazing guy, isn't he?"

"I agree."

While looking at the report, which was organized neatly in graphs in order to show visually about the trainees' data, Chairman Won JinMoon seemed satisfied and signed in approval straight away. Although there was a video attached, he put it on the side while saying he would look at it later. It was possible only because he believed in KangYoon.

"Then I'll take..."

"Wait, President Lee. Why don't you have some tea?"

President Lee HyunJi stiffened. This was a signal that there was something important to talk about. She sat on the sofa where guests would usually sit and soon, a cup of tea with a faint fragrance was given to her.

"I'm delighted that the concert team is going better than I thought."

"Thank you, Chairman."

"But you know? Although the achievements are high, there's no substance. I find that a pity."

President Lee HyunJi couldn't answer straight away. The Chairman had indirectly spoken that KangYoon hadn't received his worth even though he had done exceptionally. While she was in a difficult position, Chairman Won JinMoon continued speaking.

"After the director's meeting last time, someone brought this up.

It was about the compensation being too low even though we had done a lot for Sedy and SeasonS. You do know that saying you didn't know KangYoon's ability would be so good will just be an excuse, right?"

"...Of course, Chairman."

President Lee HyunJi deeply sighed. This was a topic that she expected to come up sooner or later. Since although they had made a huge foothold with Sedy and SeasonS, MG Entertainment received so little reward compared to that. In the end, money was the problem. Good outside evaluations on KangYoon was an element that wouldn't be included in evaluations. In the end, they were just appearances.

"Director Yu GyungTae said this – It's a waste to lend Team Leader Lee's abilities to outside, even though there are singers who don't see light within the company, and we're making others feel good – Isn't it reasonable?"

"Chairman, Mr. KangYoon, no, Team Leader Lee has too much work. Recently, as he even took Min JinSeo, his work..."

"Oh, oh. Don't worry about that. The concert team will take a rest. We can't push around precious resources so mindlessly. While resting, can't you raise Team Leader Lee's price? You can just weed out cheap works while mediating suitable expensive works to raise the price of the concert team."

"Chairman..."

President Lee HyunJi couldn't say anything. There was nothing for her to use as an excuse. The works that came to the concert team until now were all those that made little money.

She was frightened at the Chairman's ability in mediating between the board and her.

"Haha. Don't worry. I won't steal Team Leader Lee and give him to someone else. It's just that we need Team Leader Lee's ability he

showed in the Japan project.”

“...I understand. Then what work will Team Leader Lee work on?”

“[The ACE album](#).”

(T/N: This is pronounced ‘Dee-Ess/Thee-Ess’ apparently, like DS)

“The ACE? HyeRin and Iris, are you talking about them?”

President Lee HyunJi groaned. Chairman Won JinMoon asked again while sipping his tea slowly.

“What is it? Is it a problem since they failed even though they brought out 2 albums?”

“It isn’t easy. Even on Team Leader Lee’s career...”

“We’re not selecting work for him to pile up his career.”

“.....”

“I already decided. If even Team Leader Lee can’t do anything about those kids, then everyone inside the company has no choice but to pull out from them. To them, and to Team Leader Lee, this can be an opportunity. It isn’t all bad.”

President Lee HyunJi couldn’t retort to Chairman Won JinMoon’s’ firm decision anymore.

‘No one in the Planning Team could find a color to plan them. Can Team Leader Lee do this...?’

While thinking about the duo girl group, who nobody could do anything about, President Lee HyunJi fell into worry.

KangYoon turned off the computer and left the office. As he had finished his work early, he had left right at leaving time. KangYoon was immersed in happiness that he could leave work before sunset today, when he couldn’t do so until now because he was busy, and headed towards the lobby.

As he was about to leave the lobby, there was someone who

urgently called him from the elevator.

“Sir!!”

When KangYoon turned back, he saw it was Min JinSeo. She hurriedly exited the elevator and stood in front of him.

“JinSeo, is there anything urgent?”

“Hek...hek. Sir, you’re going home really early today.”

“I should have a day like this once in awhile.”

As Min JinSeo knew it, KangYoon was the person who always left the latest. The KangYoon she knew left after all employees had left and even after most trainees left after practice. However, today, as he left before sunset, it was reasonable for her to think it was strange.

“I...I have something to ask of you.”

“Ask me?”

“Yes, although I know it’s rude... I want you to listen to me...”

Min JinSeo hesitated her words. She originally hated to cause inconvenience towards others. So, she usually tried to do everything alone no matter what, but today, she was a bit different.

“What is it?”

“Tomorrow...”

“Yeah, tomorrow’s the recording, right?”

“Yes, you remember it?”

“Of course I do, it’s about you.”

While giving meaning to KangYoon’s nonchalant words, Min JinSeo blushed a little. However, soon, she knew that this wasn’t the important thing as she went into topic.

“Tomorrow...can you go with me? I... in truth... am a bit

nervous...'

Min JinSeo fidgeted nervously while waiting for an answer from KangYoon.

Unlike the mature her, and like a girl in puberty...

Chapter 37: The Girl Who Calls Kisses (3)

“You want me to go together with you for the recording?”

“Yes.”

At KangYoon’s return question, Min JinSeo lowered her head in embarrassment. As her face was flushed, she was wrapping her face with her hands.

“Are you too nervous because it’s your first recording?”

“.....”

In truth, it was half right and half wrong. It was half excitement, and half nervousness. Although she could go alone, this was her first recording in her life. She wanted to show KangYoon no matter what. Of course, although she knew that KangYoon was very busy, she wanted to be selfish at this moment.

“What scene is it?”

“It’s a hospital scene. Two of them.”

Min JinSeo found the scenes in which she appeared in and showed them to Kangyoon. It was a scene where she was on a ringer’s solution on the hospital bed, receiving the male protagonist’s worry; and another scene where she screamed while running towards her brother after finding that he was getting beaten up by loan sharks because of the debt due to her hospital fees.

After reading the script, KangYoon handed it back to Min JinSeo.

“When did they say they needed you?”

“It’s at night. The hospital where the recording happens said that they could only allow a recording after the hospital finishes all its treatments for the day, so they told me to come at 8 o’clock.”

“8 o’clock, you say... That time will be doable. Okay, let’s go together.”

“Thank you.”

When KangYoon’s permission came, Min JinSeo smiled brightly. It was a beautiful smile that any passersby would look back at her at least once. However, as he had seen such expressions all day, KangYoon wasn’t moved much.

“Let’s depart at 6 tomorrow. We’re rookies so we need to arrive early, greet the staff and hand out drinks.”

“Yes. Sir is different as always. The manager oppas that were allocated to me never said such things.”

Min JinSeo’s eyes were shining. KangYoon didn’t hesitate when doing something. Her eyes looking at KangYoon were like the eyes looking at a venerable teacher.

“They didn’t speak about it, but they should all know about it. The managers will all be in one team with you, JinSeo, so you have to treat them well. Don’t bully them just because you’re well-off, okay?”

“Yes. I understand.”

KangYoon and Min JinSeo’s way home were the same. Thanks to that, the two walked together towards the bus stop together. Passing by the city noises and the bright neon signs, the two arrived at the bus stop.

“I won’t be able to get on the bus easily from now on.”

“That’s true. Will you miss it?”

“Yes. I might long for a full bus, maybe?”

“That’s... not true.”

“Hahaha.”

Min JinSeo kept chatting. Although she didn’t speak a lot normally, currently, she kept expressing her excitement. She seemed to want to share her joy in debuting as she never stopped speaking. The time to prepare for her dreams had ended and now

was the time to jump in for real. Now her second life would start. In her expectation, her heart was pounding.

‘Debut, eh? It’s no wonder she’s so excited...’

KangYoon smiled while listening to her words. The 7 years as a manager before he became a planner, and the 10 years of failure of his ‘past life’ had made him watch many debuts of celebrities. This kind of excitement from Min JinSeo was natural to KangYoon and also, he was used to it.

While Min JinSeo kept expressing her excitement, the bus arrived. Min JinSeo got on while expressing her pity.

“Thank you, sir.”

“Be careful on your way home.”

Min JinSeo sat next to the window and waved towards KangYoon. When KangYoon waved, the bus started accelerating. At that moment, Min JinSeo opened the window and shouted towards KangYoon.

“Sir!! I, like #@%\$#^@^@%^#^@#%#\$”

However, Min JinSeo’s voice was buried under the loud bus engine noises. KangYoon wanted to ask again, but he couldn’t ask as the bus was already far away.

‘Good times.’

In the end, KangYoon just thought that it would be something like ‘cheers!’ and headed to the train station.

A day without concert team work was a peaceful day for KangYoon. If there was any concert team related work, then work will overwhelm him like a tide and KangYoon’s desk will be full of work. Today, when he had no work related to the concert team and the work with SeasonS had ended, KangYoon’s desk was very clean.

“I’m so free.”

KangYoon, who finished all his work in the morning, was spending his time surfing the internet leisurely. However, as if someone knew that he was spending his time leisurely, KangYoon's phone rang loudly. It was a call from the President's Secretary office.

“Yes, Lee KangYoon.”

-It's the President's Secretary office. There are some papers from the President's office. Please check.

When KangYoon confirmed, a male secretary came down soon and placed the papers on KangYoon's desk. On the title of the thick papers, 'The ACE album planning (working title)' was written.

'The ACE? It's that group pronounced not 'ace' but 'Dee-Ess' right? It's MG's...'

KangYoon typed it on the internet right away. Then, the results came up on the first result along with the members' names.

'Oh, I remember. HyeRin and Iris.'

As singers under MG Entertainment, they were singers who even did a 2nd album and a digital single. From what he knew, they transferred to acting. However, they never got into singing again. In KangYoon's memory, this was the only thing about The ACE.

'They went thinly, and long. As celebrities too. However, as singers, they didn't last long.'

KangYoon looked at the papers. This meant that the project of the 2nd Planning Team under Director Lee HyunSang will be passed over to him, the Planning Team Leader.

And also, there was something about stopping the work with the concert team.

'The team from Director Lee HyunSang... It seems something happened in the company.'

If even the 2nd album didn't go well, the company had to look for

other paths. It seemed that the ‘path’ they found was KangYoon. Of course, he predicted that there was a fight between the directors and President lee HyunJi, but KangYoon ignored these facts. Being a puppet between them was something he would hate to be.

‘When will I be able to do my own work. I wish that time came quickly.’

KangYoon closed the papers. He decided to check it thoroughly later. It was because the time to meet up with Min JinSeo had come.

KangYoon wore his jacket and went down to the underground parking lot.

“Good afternoon, sir.”

“Are you ready?”

Min JinSeo had already finished preparing for departure along with the managers. The coordinator had selected the necessary costumes and put them inside the van, and the road manager had also finished checking the vehicle. Everyone was tense as they knew that KangYoon would go with them today.

“Yes. Oh, boy. I’m nervous.”

“You will do well, I know it. Let’s go.”

KangYoon patted Min JinSeo’s back once and departed to the hospital with everyone where the recording will occur.

Min JinSeo became more and more silent as they neared the hospital. Her nervousness seemed to be increasing as she was shivering slightly. The staff that she will meet for the first time, and then her seniors in acting – how would they be? As she was young, and as this was her first time, this was natural. KangYoon planned to open up her path for her in order for her to do well.

“Good evening, I’m from MG Entertainment.”

As soon as they arrived, KangYoon started handing out drinks

and simple snacks along with the managers. The world of broadcasting seemed to be small as there were some who seemed delighted to see KangYoon.

“Huh? Mr. Lee KangYoon?”

“Han-[seonbae](#)!!”

(T/N: Seonbae = Senpai)

“Wow, just how long has it been? I heard you gave up being a manager and started doing something else?”

While KangYoon was handing out drinks, he met one of his previous colleagues who was still working as a manager in another company. Most of the people here greeted KangYoon delightfully. Min JinSeo, who was with KangYoon was shocked that KangYoon was so friendly with them.

After handing out drinks to Joo HyunJin’s van, who would work with the producer today, KangYoon finally came back to the rest area.

“There’s no seat for you yet, I see. Well, that’s obvious.”

“Seat?”

KangYoon pointed towards the seats installed on one side of the hospital. Although there must be seats as it was a hospital, they had set a different set of seats due to the recording.

“Yes, seats. The main actors and actresses have their own seats. Look.”

Min JinSeo turned her gaze towards the seats which KangYoon pointed towards. On the back of the seat was a name tag with ‘Joo HyunJin-nim’ written on it. Although there was no other lead actors who were in today’s recording, there were no other seats.

“I’m alright.”

“No.”

Min JinSeo wasn't down only because there wasn't a seat with her name on it. However, KangYoon shook his head strongly at her words.

“You can't be alright with it. You need to make that seat yours.”

“..Make it mine?”

“Of course. That seat represents the lead actor or actress. That seat will follow every recording scene where the lead actor would appear in. From now on, you need to put in effort so that that seat will be your aim. Everyone, not just me, will help you in doing that. Your next aim is that seat. You understand?”

“Yes.”

Min JinSeo kept in mind the lead actor's seat. It was a portable seat commonly seen in beaches. However, sitting on such seats had become her dream.

As the hospital stage wasn't set yet, the props team were moving busily. The props team, who covered the hospital logo with the hospital logo from the drama, and the camera team which checked the movement paths of the actors. The producer, and the simultaneous recording team, who tried to record sounds effectively. – All these were new to her. She was a teen. The recording scene she had only heard about was very novel to her.

“Wow...”

“Is it new to you?”

“H... hello!! I'm...”

“I know, I know. You're Min JinSeo, right?”

The one to speak to Min JinSeo suddenly, when she was exclaiming while looking around, was Writer Song TaeJin. She approached Min JinSeo without hesitation when she was on her guard.

Although writers didn't usually appear on the recording scene,

she had come since this was the first recording. Of course, there was something else she was curious about.

“Yes. Excuse me but...”

“So you don’t know me. I’m KangYoon’s friend.”

“Sorry?”

There was a person who called KangYoon so rudely? Min JinSeo didn’t like this person. Moreover, the chubby body, as if she didn’t manage her body, was even more of a minus. However, she felt that she couldn’t take her lightly as she felt a strange charisma from her.

“Hahaha!! You don’t have to be so nervous. I only came here directly since I want to see what kind of person you are.”

“Me?”

“Of course. Hm, as expected. It’s as KangYoon said. The image fits completely, if it wasn’t I was going to snap him in half.”

Min JinSeo didn’t like this woman who spoke of doing frightening things to KangYoon. However, she didn’t show it on the outside. Although she was still young, she had naturally learned endurance from her long time as a trainee.

“You came?”

“Yes, I did. I should at least check if the thing I put in is the real thing.”

“No matter how cruel you are, how can you speak such things in front of the person herself...”

This blatant noo-nim was as always. KangYoon criticized her for speaking whatever she wanted in front of a child.

“What about it? This field is all like that. Hey, pretty girl. This field is all about front deals and back deals. Isn’t it right, KangYoon?”

“That is true but... If you have no skills then front or back, neither will work.”

“Of course. KangYoon, good. I heard she caught the eyes of the producer? I look forward to it.”

“You will be satisfied.”

“Then I’m leaving.”

Song TaeJin waved her thick hands as she left. Min JinSeo was confused as she didn’t understand any of the conversation.

“Sir, what happened just now?”

However, KangYoon just said that he will talk about it later and didn’t reply to her. Along with the words that this wasn’t the important thing.

“Action!!”

With the producer’s signal, the recording started for real.

“SuJin, SuJin!!”

The recording started with the male protagonist running towards the hospital ward where Min JinSeo was lying with difficulty.

“Oppa... You can’t run inside... hospitals...”

“...SuJin...”

The male protagonist who has to show no sadness despite being sad, Min JinSeo who had to act well despite being not well – this was a scene where they had to show the affections of siblings that didn’t want to inconvenience each other.

Min JinSeo’s teary eyes and her smile at the mouth was close-up’d. The producer seemed to be satisfied after looking at the monitor as he shouted.

“Cut!!”

There was not even a single [NG](#). The producer laughed heartily

as the first, second and third tries were all good. Just in case, they did one more, but whether it was Min JinSeo or the male protagonist, Joo HyunJin, they showed perfect sync.

(T/N: NG = no good, recording screw ups)

“She’s a jackpot. Her immersion into the role is no joke.”

“Mr. Joo HyunJin was also amazing in his immersion as well. They looked like real siblings.”

The audio directors also spoke one line each while monitoring with the producers. In their heads, they were drawing how to edit this scene. This was the first episode, which would decide the viewer ratings, and as an exceptional video came out, the directors all inwardly exclaimed in delight.

Min JinSeo also seemed to be curious as she went to the monitoring area along with Joo HyunJin after the recording.

“Kya, so amazing, my little sister, ain’t ya?”

“Thank you, seonbae-nim.”

Joo HyunJin praised Min JinSeo in satisfaction while monitoring. He was a young actor well known for his acting. However, as he was acting with Min JinSeo, a teen, he really felt like his sister was ill. He even felt like hugging her due to being immersed so much.

“Let’s go with the next scene.”

The producer said there was nothing to see anymore and coolly hurried with setting the next scene.

While the staff were busily moving around, in one corner of the recording venue, KangYoon and Song TaeJin was looking at Min JinSeo’s recording together.

“How is it?”

“...KangYoon, you really...”

Song TaeJin hugged KangYoon with her thick arms. KangYoon struggled in shock, but she didn't let go easily.

“Uk... Noonim, the people are looking.”

“Sob sob. She's a definite in my future works, definite!! It's the first time I saw a girl like that, she's [cider](#) to my heart!!”

(T/N: Cider = refreshing, this kinda became a thing in Korea, E/N: cider is also basically korean sprite)

Song TaeJin seemed touched as she didn't hide her strong emotions. Looking at Min JinSeo acting, Song TaeJin felt like her heart had become refreshed. Until now, she was unsatisfied with the little sister role and boiled inside, but as she solved it in one go, it was kinda reasonable.

‘There's no music so I can't see the light, eh.’

KangYoon felt it was a pity. As there was no music, there was no light. So, he had to judge purely by her acting ability. He thought about becoming greedy and going into the acting side of the entertainment industry but perhaps was as expected. He became firm in his thought in digging a well in just the music side. Even so, KangYoon was satisfied while looking at Min JinSeo who attracted attention from other people.

‘It has become time to let her go from my hands.’

KangYoon resolved. He didn't know much about acting. He had to start learning from the beginning if he wanted to know about planning actors or actresses. Although he made Min JinSeo debut as he knew her future and possibilities, in the future, it was a different problem. KangYoon resolved that he should prepare for a takeover if there was a person who would raise Min JinSeo and make her play in bigger waters.

“We're moving!!”

With the words from the audio director, who finished preparing for moving, the entire staff started moving. KangYoon also took

Min JinSeo and headed towards the next place.

“Thank you for your work.”

Min JinSeo and KangYoon who separated from the actors and the staff who had further recordings, got on the van. Today, there were only two scenes in which she appeared. However, the impactful recording left a strong impression on everyone. Moreover, KangYoon assured himself that today's recording would leave a deep impression as today's recording would be the first episode.

“Well done.”

“Thank you for your work.”

As soon as she got on the van, Min JinSeo's strength left her body and she slumped down. Looking at that, KangYoon subconsciously laughed. A star's figure after a schedule was the same no matter who. Such a slumped figure would only be seen inside the van. KangYoon laughed at Min JinSeo who acted like the van was her home.

“What is it?”

“It's nothing. It's just that you seem to have adapted well.”

“No, I'm still far from it.”

Unlike her words, Min JinSeo rested in the most comfortable position in the world inside the van. Min JinSeo's coordinator and managers were also organizing her schedule and doing their work.

‘It seems there's no need to worry about the on-site team members.’

If they were people who found work of their own accord, he didn't need to worry much. In recordings, the coordinator also helped in progressing the recording without hitches with things like costumes and makeups. The manager also didn't only just rest at the scene and guarded next to Min JinSeo in case something

came up. KangYoon checked all these things.

‘Such a pity.’

KangYoon smiled bitterly. As he thought about how he would let go of one, he felt strange. Of course, he would feel that the official debut will be the production announcement, or when she appeared on TV, KangYoon felt like he was letting go of his child.

“Sir.”

“What is it? Rest a little more.”

“I, will become the best actress.”

“Please do.”

“I’m not joking. It’s for real.”

“Okay.”

As if she had read KangYoon’s mood, Min JinSeo, who was lying down consoled him. KangYoon just thought she was saying the obvious and he just pretended to listen. KangYoon already knew that the future Min JinSeo would be in a very high position. To him, such words from her didn’t sound that new. However, Min JinSeo was thinking more than just what KangYoon knew.

“And I’ll, to you...”

“Hmm?”

“...Nothing.”

Although he found it strange that she whispered the end of her words, KangYoon didn’t mind it much. He just thought that she was dreaming of the highest position and just passed it off.

However, KangYoon didn’t know that the hidden words would bring about a huge typhoon in the future.

Of course, the time for the typhoon will be far into the future.

Quite far...

Chapter 38: The Girl Who Calls Kisses (4)

“Haiz, really... What is it that he called us at 10 o’clock at night?”

Director Moon GwangShik grumbled as he entered the lobby hurriedly. Today, he planned to eat out and chat with the directors at a restaurant. There was no way he would feel good being called to work when he was about to drink.

“That’s what I want to say. Ayy, to think we would get called to work just because a single trainee is debuting...”

Director Kim JinHo also didn’t seem to feel any different. Especially since, he had planned to speak about a lot of things today so it was more unsettling.

However, their complaints only lasted until the lobby. They all knew that it was the punishment for their actions in the director’s meeting. Chairman Won JinMoon’s vicious side was already well known amongst the directors.

The directors who arrived at the chairman’s office all bowed to Chairman Won JinMoon politely.

“Welcome. Sorry for calling you despite the fact that you were eating outside.”

“Not at all, Chairman.”

Director Jung HyunTae shook his head strongly. He couldn’t say ‘Why did you call us if you know it?’ or something like that. All the directors shook their heads while saying it was alright and Chairman Won JinMoon smiled in satisfaction as he turned on the TV.

“Right on time.”

Just in time, the commercial ended, and ‘Whispers of the Stars’ began. It started slowly with the male protagonist’s, Joo HyunJin’s soliloquy. As a stereotypical [love square romance](#) following the

latest trend, the female protagonist, the male protagonist and the antagonists were all following their own stories.

(T/N: love triangle = 2 girls in love with 1 male/ love square = 3 girls in love with 1 male)

Of course, it seemed there was too little stimulation for the directors as they found no fun.

‘Morning dramas are way more interesting.’

Rather than a mini-series where there was no ‘rough’ and ‘refreshing’ scenes, the head-clearing fighting scenes in morning dramas were much more to their taste. Their views were completely different when watching as a hobby and when watching for work.

“So she comes out now.”

While the directors were yawning secretly, Chairman Won JinMoon pointed towards the TV. Min JinSeo was finally appearing. It was the scene where the male protagonist ran towards Min JinSeo’s ward. This was 40 minutes into the drama.

‘Fuck, so late.’

‘Should I fucking kill him... Who’s the director, Ahh shit.’

The directors all grumbled at Min JinSeo’s late appearance. The purpose of this gathering was for Min JinSeo lying down right there, but as she only appeared after $\frac{2}{3}$ of the drama, it was reasonable.

Whether it knew the directors’ feelings or not, the TV kept playing the drama.

-Oppa... You can’t run inside... hospitals...

-...SuJin...

-Oppa, what is it? Did someone die? Don’t make that face.

Min JinSeo’s figure, smiling bravely in order to not worry her

‘brother’, really seemed like a feeble little sister. Although it was through an cathode TV, it kept making the directors fall into the drama.

-What about me? It’s just because it’s funny to see you in a place like this.

-Hey? Look at you.

The big brother who tried to hide his sad emotions to the little sister collapsed in the ward, and the little sister who acted brave – Joo HyunJin and Min JinSeo were inviting all the watchers into the drama as if they were real siblings.

Although their scene passed by quickly and the drama progressed, the two’s acting left a lasting impression.

‘Ah, To think I let go of that!!’

‘Lee KangYoon, to think he will catch something like that.’

The directors all shivered when they thought that they let go of the golden egg-laying duck. They all felt like going crazy no matter how they thought about it. Just why did I not find a jewel like that until now – They all banged their chests in such emotion.

The drama, ‘Whispers of the Stars’ ended when Joo HyunJin ran into the female protagonist and something was about to happen. This was a cliffhanger to make the viewers watch the next episode.

After the drama ended, Chairman Won JinMoon finally spoke about the reason why he called them.

“I need to look at the media to be sure, but I’m very sure that Min JinSeo will become a hit. What about you guys?”

“My thoughts are the same, Chairman. Looking at her acting skills, I cannot think how it will fail.”

Director Lee HanSeo followed quickly. Befitting of the most quick-witted director, he scratched Chairman Won JinMoon’s back quickly.

‘Ah, fuck... that fox.’

There was a fight of wits even between the directors. The colleague directors all gritted their teeth at Director Lee HanSeo’s cunningness.

Whether he knew or not, Chairman Won JinMoon continued.

“Although we were raising trainee actors until now, we didn’t do for real. The reason was the lack of infrastructure and knowhow. However, we got our first actress, and a promising rising star. The Board of Directors should support Min JinSeo with all its strength, and also, strengthen the support to actor trainees in the future.”

“I understand, Chairman.”

“I will listen to the results of the support in the Director’s meeting.”

As soon as the conversation ended, Chairman Won JinMoon let them go. In the end, what he wanted to say was just that one line, and although the grumbling directors made him mind, he didn’t do anything.

When the directors went away like the tide, Chairman Won JinMoon stood by the window.

‘His skills in placing an item like Min JinSeo into the right place... Just who here has that ability? Lee KangYoon. No matter how I think about it, he’s amazing. If it wasn’t for him, then that child would have wandered to another place.’

When KangYoon first spoke to give him Min Jinseo, he even thought that KangYoon had ‘another’ feeling for a trainee. However, KangYoon’s eyes were accurate. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that he had made the foothold for actors and actresses for MG Entertainment, which was unimaginable before.

‘It isn’t just that. To let go of what he achieved. This is also amazing.’

KangYoon reported that he will prepare for a takeover after the debut finishes successfully and the viewer ratings stabilize. Nobody would say anything even if he got some more achievements in his pocket with the excuse of stabilization, but he clearly kept his word. He didn't even vaguely mention the time. He nailed the time, the 7th or 8th episode when the viewer ratings would stabilize.

‘With this, Team Leader Lee will earn trust whether he knows or not. At least, the trust that he will be true to his words. Also, there will be an amazing amount of under-the-surface works in order to get Min JinSeo.’

There was a possibility of fighting between the directors because of Min JinSeo. If this became worse, then it might even cause some harm to the company. Chairman Won JinMoon was planning to manage Min JinSeo himself along with JooAh. He had no pressure about achievements anyway so nobody would say anything about it. He was planning to make her first-rate by expanding the foothold that KangYoon had made.

While looking at the beautiful night scenery of Seoul, Chairman Won JinMoon kept drawing how to lead MG Entertainment in the future.

KangYoon, who received new work, headed towards the President's office to consult about the project.

When he arrived, President Lee HyunJi was already waiting with coffee.

The two started analyzing The ACE, who will make an album this time, while sipping coffee.

“Their dance isn't bad. But their expressions aren't that good.”

KangYoon paid attention to their expressions while looking at the video of The ACE. The dance wasn't bad. However, there was an extremely small change in their expression. It was the same

with another video.

“So they all have similar problems.”

President Lee HyunJi agreed to KangYoon’s opinion. The members of The ACE, HyeRin and Iris were bad with their expression while moving around the stage with a sexy dance. Even their smiles looked somewhat lacking. Expressions were a must in TV programme dances where they need to seduce the audience, but the two lacked such appeal.

“Hmm...”

KangYoon shook his head while looking at the video. He also considered the memorable music. However, there was a lot of problem with their expressions as they danced. To say it badly, it was a style that would make people fed up quickly

“To say it badly, they can be considered as having no star quality.”

“No star quality... Is it such in your eyes, Team Leader Lee?”

“...Strictly speaking, yes.”

KangYoon honestly voiced his current opinions. The two in the video had no charm that attracted the people as KangYoon said. The two women inside the video were mostly ignored by the audience. It was fortunate that they didn’t receive jeers from the audience. If they had any star quality at all then the audience might have looked at the two.

While quickly running through the videos of their performances and their practices, the two spoke a lot about the singers.

“This part is good.”

However, KangYoon, who only said bad things until now, paid attention to one of the videos. It was the video where HyeRin and Iris were singing in a radio.

“It’s ‘Fly to’. I like this song...”

President Lee HyunJi closed her eyes while listening to HyeRin's and Iris' singing. Although it was an acappella, their matching harmonies were producing beautiful sounds.

‘Jazz? It's not easy to sing this kind of songs. If there was an accompaniment, then it might have been better, such a pity.’

KangYoon thought a bit differently. However, without even being given time to feel any pity, the video ended.

“Well, then. Shall we put away the videos and talk about work?”

President Lee HyunJi turned the video off while saying it was enough. KangYoon also thought it was enough and brought out the papers that he brought. He had to think about what concept he would go with for the album while thinking about the current The ACE and the latest trend.

“How do you think this will go?”

“It won't be easy.”

“That same comment as always.”

President Lee HyunJi lightly teased him. KangYoon became a little embarrassed and coughed. Then, President Lee HyunJi smiled.

“President, that's...”

“Heh, sorry. Please continue.”

As she believed completely in KangYoon now, President Lee HyunJi also had some leisure. She and KangYoon were colleagues on the same path. While showing her rare leisurely appearance, the two started talking again.

“Even though they had released their 2nd album, the recognition is very lacking. Fortunately, they have a fan club, albeit small. As far as I know, they are around 300.”

“They completely failed. Director Lee HyunSang can't raise his head after his work with The ACE.”

The directors had their own problems. They had to take responsibility for their plans. Like President Lee HyunJi had to take responsibility for the results of what KangYoon had planned, the directors also had to take responsibility for the results of the planners and celebrities under them. Their position in the company changed according to the success or failure of the plans under their name. This was the culture of MG Entertainment.

“Whether it will go well or not, isn’t it up to the God of Music?”

“I should at least do my best to catch the eyes of that God, right?”

KangYoon could only laugh at President Lee HyunJi’s words.

In the underground studio of MG Entertainment, Yoon HyeRin was restlessly walking around the spot. Kim JinGyung asked her when she saw that she was restlessly moving around as if waiting for someone.

“HyeRin, are you that excited?”

Although she didn’t look that happy, as they were friends who were together for a long time, she knew very well that HyeRin was excited.

“Of course. Lee KangYoon, it’s Team Leader Lee KangYoon!! It’s the person who planned for JooAh-seonbae!! I’m really that excited!!”

“Actually, I still think it’s a dream. I thought that I would’ve had to wash dishes in restaurants after the contract ended...”

The two still felt as if they were dreaming. The company had already half-given up with Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyung(Iris). After their 2nd album failed miserably, they had no schedules coming in and they had nothing to do even after coming to work. To a celebrity, the insult of eating the gazes of disdain from others was like hell.

“HyeRin, JinGyung, get ready. Team Leader has come.”

“Kyak!!”

At manager Jung ChanHyung’s words, the two started moving around quickly. They cleaned the already clean table, and they organized the magazines again.

Soon, the door opened and KangYoon came in.

“Good day to you sir!! We’re The ACE!!”

The two women wanted to show a good image in their first meeting with KangYoon, so they greeted in a loud voice. However, it seemed their voice was too big as KangYoon became surprised, stepped back a few steps and fell down on his butt.

“Team Leader!! Are you alright?”

Kim JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin became shocked and they pulled KangYoon up.

“Oh...Yes. I’m alright. I’m, Lee KangYoon.”

“.....”

KangYoon stood up while grabbing their hands. Due to embarrassment, it was hard for him to meet their eyes.

Starting from their first meeting, the three ended up doing an unintentional, not funny slapstick.

Chapter 39: Outside, Again!! (1)

Posted on September 11, 2016 by Chamber — 11 Comments ↓

Although there was slapstick in their first meeting, KangYoon started the first meeting with The ACE as if nothing had happened.

After a simple greeting, they talked about what kind of songs they did until now, what they wanted to do next and other things such as their preferred genre of music.

However, in less than 10 minutes, KangYoon realized that he had made a terrible mistake.

“They have no opinions of their own!!”

While listening to them saying that they were fine with everything, KangYoon shivered in fright. They were basically saying ‘whatever is fine’. An ordinary singer would usually have something they would want to sing, and KangYoon would see if such songs would fit that singer or not, but there weren’t much cases like The ACE.

“You’re good with ballad, and rock?”

“...Yes.”

“You’re fine with dances, and rock?”

“Yes.”

“You’re fine with everything?”

“Yes!!”

At KangYoon’s question, Yoon HyeRin answered in a bright voice. ...Is this a 3 year old?

As he couldn’t smack Yoon HyeRin who was smiling brightly, KangYoon endured and continued speaking.

“...Yes. You can like everything. But my question is, what do you want to do?”

“We’re fine with everything.”

“.....”

The ‘whatever’-like answer flipped KangYoon’s insides over.

In the end, this meant that these girls didn’t have any opinions of their own. KangYoon sighed deeply.

“...Okay. Let’s rest for a bit.”

KangYoon declared rest since he had met singers who were different to those he met until now. He needed some time to rest. Positively speaking, they were obedient, negatively speaking, they had no opinions. KangYoon couldn’t find any way out of this situation.

KangYoon, who came upstairs to the resting area for a bit, slumped on the table just like that.

‘Should I download every song there is and find the most suited song for them...?’

It wasn’t a bad method. Anyway, since he had the ability to judge whether a singer matched a song or not, he didn’t worry that much. However, KangYoon shook his head.

‘Just when can I find a song that suits them with this idiotic method?’

If there wasn’t anything, then it would only be a waste of time. It would be fortunate if he found it straight away, but if he didn’t, he had to look for it until he found one. If there was a clue, then it would be better, but if there wasn’t, then it was just pure labor. It was also nonsensical to buy all those songs with the budget allocated to The ACE.

‘Dance and ballad is no g.....’

“ACK! So cold!!”

While KangYoon was in deep thought, he sat up abruptly from the table due to the cold thing he could feel on his cheek. When he

did, Jung MinAh was laughing with a canned drink on her hand.

“Ahjussi, hello.”

“Team Leader.”

“Tch... there’s only the two of us here though... Team Leader.”

While rebelling that there was no one around, Jung MinAh pouted.

“Here.”

“You’re buying?”

“It’s not good to be treated by you the whole time.”

“Thanks.”

KangYoon received the drink from Jung MinAh and popped it. The can popping sounds resounded across.

“That was a loud sound.”

“It’s just a can and... MinAh, is it your resting time right now?”

“Yes. Ah... Today’s so hard too...”

MinAh took out the chair and sat facing KangYoon. Jung MinAh was a daring trainee who unrestrainedly approached KangYoon, who was not easy to be approached to. Although he was a target of admiration and envy, he wasn’t so easily approached due to fear. However, she was unhesitant on that.

“Are you tired?”

“Yes.”

“Practice until you’re more tired. I can see you have plenty of energy since you’re speaking here right now.”

“Whoa, so evil.”

KangYoon teased Jung MinAh and smiled. She was a cute trainee. Although she was a strict trainee, to KangYoon, she was just cute.

“But, Team Leader, are you worried about anything?”

“Worry?”

“You were suffering on the table.”

“It’s not to the point of a ‘worry’. It’s just that I can’t understand something. Wait.”

Jung MinAh was also a trainee. She would be a singer soon. Although she wasn’t one right now, KangYoon decided to ask if here was a song she wanted to do.

“MinAh, what kind of songs do you want to do?”

“Songs? Do you mean genre?”

“Genre or whatever.”

“You know I’m weak at singing. If it’s a dance themed song, then I’m good with whatever. I don’t think a slow-beat one matches me though...”

Jung MinAh also had something she wanted to do. Every people had their own styles. At this point, KangYoon had a question.

“MinAh, most singers would have a song that they want to do, right?”

“Shouldn’t it be? Just that I heard singers matched whatever the company says. Although they do match the singers if the singer is a big shot, but the powerless ones... Team Leader?”

As if he had remembered something, KangYoon abruptly stood up so Jung MinAh panicked.

“MinAh, thanks!! I will treat you to a drink some time!!”

“Team Leader!! Where are you going? Hey, ahjussi!!”

KangYoon instantly disappeared. Although Jung MinAh called him, he had already left.

“So fast. Ayy. I should go back to practice.”

Jung MinAh shrugged her shoulders and headed to the practice room.

When KangYoon hurriedly ran towards them, Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyung were confused.

“Team Leader, where did you go?”

However, KangYoon didn't reply and went into topic.

“HyeRin, JinGyun!! Do you girls really don't have anything you want to do?”

“Something we really want to... do?”

At KangYoon's question, HyeRin seemed to hesitate as she stuttered. JinGyung only kept her silence.

“I will ask you one last time. A song you really want to do, is there one or is there not? This might be your last album. Shouldn't you do something you want for your last one?”

KangYoon came out strong. It was literally an ultimatum. KangYoon seemed to have decided to not open his mouth anymore as he kept his silence and waited for their answers. They spoke to themselves while whispering.

Finally, Kim JinGyung carefully spoke.

“...For me, jazz...”

It was a mosquito-like voice. However, KangYoon heard it clearly.

“Jazz?”

“No, it's nothing. Please take it as if you didn't hear anything.”

Although Kim JinGyung followed up quickly, it was left clearly on KangYoon.

“Jazz, Jazz, you say. You sure?”

“.....”

Kim JinGyung shook her head, but that didn't work on KangYoon. While making a suspicious smile, KangYoon turned his head towards Yoon HyeRin. It was a silent signal – 'You speak too'.

"I..."

"..."

"For me... al, also jazz."

Yoon HyeRin also replied in a small voice. However, KangYoon could hear it clearly.

'So this is the reason why they didn't say it. Who would listen to them if they said they want to do jazz? They will scold them first.'

KangYoon finally knew why they said they were good with everything. It wouldn't work even if I say it – this was what they were thinking.

'Jazz... Will jazz really work? I also need to see if it fits them...'

If it was 2017 when KangYoon originally was in, jazz would have worked. It was because jazz bands had come to Korea frequently and it became more and more public. However, this was the year 2008. Although jazz was known, it wouldn't be said to be liked by the public.

'No, it might work because that's the case.'

KangYoon thought differently. Although traditional jazz wouldn't be easy, the music of The ACE was popular music. The song would be composed with jazz in mind, but it wouldn't be traditional jazz. Although new music brings risks, if it works, it would make a rise of a new trend. If a good music was approached with jazz in mind, then it was very possible.

"Jazz, let's try it."

KangYoon decided on the direction. He decided that they would go big anyway since they were doing it. Then, the already smiling expressions of Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyung became even more

brighter. Now they were starting to smile from the bottom of their hearts.

“Are we really doing jazz?”

Kim JinGyung asked in disbelief but KangYoon gave her a clear answer.

“Let’s try it first. If it’s good, then we’re doing it.”

“Really!?”

Kim JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin, who were smiling like ‘good people’, now made true smiles. There wasn’t a person like KangYoon until now. They had a good premonition.

“Thank you for your work.”

As the trainer left, the harsh group singing practice ended. The girls all slumped on the ground. Although not as much as dancing, singing was also physically draining. Thanks to that, they also received a lot of stress.

“Jung MinAh, wait.”

“Why?”

“Yahoo.”

“Get out before I get angry.”

When Christie An jumped on the exposed Jung MinAh’s belly, Jung MinAh growled. However, Christie An didn’t bat an eyelid and stayed still. Although Jung MinAh moved around violently, she didn’t hit her.

“Where did Ailee-unni go?”

“Toilet.”

When Seo HanYu asked for the disappeared Ailee Jun, Han JooYeon replied simply.

“Did this girl have constipation? Why isn’t she coming?”

“It mus’ be ‘that day’. She was also all ov’r the place saying her stomach hurt, ‘esterday.”

Lee SamSoon answered Jung MinAh’s question. Jung MinAh asked her ‘do you even know your friend’s period?’ but Lee SamSoon only shrugged her shoulders.

After a long time did Ailee came back to the practice room holding her stomach. He face didn’t look that good.

“Ailee, you al’ight?”

When Lee SamSoon carefully asked, Ailee Jung shook her head. She didn’t even seem to have any power to speak. Lee SamSoon silently helped her lie down and massaged her stomach.

‘SamSoon’s so caring.’

Jung MinAh was slowly starting to learn the ‘leisure to look around’ from Lee SamSoon’s caring figure.

KangYoon requested a jazz themed song from the composers. It was to first see if the members of The ACE fit the mood. Thanks to that, he could receive 2 songs in just a few days.

When the song flowed out, KangYoon called for the members of The ACE.

“Look at that sheet music... So complex...”

Yoon HyeRin rejoiced while looking at the characteristic complex musical notes of jazz. Of course, although it wasn’t the sheet music with all the instruments included, as a characteristic of jazz, the five lines were more decorated than other genres.

“But how do I read this?”

To Kim JinGyung, who didn’t know harmonics, sheet music were just tadpoles. It was just that there were more #s attached and looked more cool. Seeing that Kim JinGyung kep tilting he head while looking at the sheet music, KangYoon just giggled.

“You just have to follow the voice so you don’t need to worry that much. The voice guide is there so you just need to look at the lyrics.”

“Good!!”

In the last few days, Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyung seemed to have gotten close to KangYoon as they were unrestrained in their talking.

“Let’s listen to it first.”

KangYoon played the guided version of the song.

-I gave — you — the beautiful — me — without any reason —

The two girls sang along the guided version while shaking their shoulders. Perhaps due to it being a jazz piece they were interested until now, they were delighted. They found fun in singing such lyrics.

KangYoon quietly watched the two singing.

‘Jazz are purple notes.’

Purple musical notes were flowing out from the two. The purple notes were producing a small white light.

‘It isn’t weak.’

White was positive. This meant that the affinity between the members of The ACE and the song wasn’t bad. Of course, he wasn’t sure of the result if they really got into the harmonics.

“Shall we listen to the next one?”

KangYoon played the next song.

-Tomorrow will be fine- if I — can — love -with hope — alone

If the previous song was a bouncy, rhythmic jazz, then this piece emphasized the melody. The two girls focused on the melody while humming.

‘It’s about the same.’

Perhaps due to it being jazz, it was similar to the previous one. Purple colored musical notes and white light – It wasn't that different.

After the song ended, KangYoon asked for their opinions of the songs.

“I like both.”

Completely different to how she was a few days ago, Kim JinGyung expressed her opinions clearly. Yoon HyeRin also seemed to be of the same opinion as she stuck to her.

“Both of them?”

“Yes.”

It was natural for a singer to be greedy about a song. Now that they had become more active from their passive first impressions, KangYoon finally could be relieved.

“Okay, let's do both.”

“Yay!!”

“Let's decide the cover song as the better one we get after recording.”

“Yes.”

At KangYoon's words, the two girls exclaimed in delight.

After that, the two girls went into practice. They decided on 2 days later as the recording day. It was thanks to KangYoon's homework for them to research into their own voice to match jazz.

One day before The ACE's recording.

KangYoon was grabbing his head in his office.

‘The recording itself isn't the problem. How can I plan the advertising?’

Duet singer, The ACE.

Although they had 2 albums, they didn't have anything special nor did they have any achievements. Although he grabbed on to the thread to produce a digital single with the concept of jazz, KangYoon was agonized over how to advertise the album.

The promotion team also didn't produce a clear answer. It was a showcase at best, but KangYoon rejected this answer. Although they did their 1st album and 2nd album on a showcase, they didn't produce clear results. Moreover, a showcase for a digital single was a waste of budget.

‘Entertainment?’

How about advertising the album on an entertainment programme on TV, which was getting famous nowadays? However, KangYoon eventually shook his head.

‘These girls don't have any sense for entertainment. It'll be the same whether they do it or not.’

It was obvious that they would receive the humiliation of being edited out. These girls didn't have that much presence in the first place. Befitting of singers from MG Entertainment, other than their appearances, they were literally just ordinary girls. They didn't have the ability to digest the rough jokes that flew at them.

The era where album sales are directly proportional to sales are gone. In the end, profits are from events. Events, events, is it? To advertise, there must be a lot of people so... universities? Shall we go to universities? University festivals are soon too...’

KangYoon took out the calendar where university festival dates were written. The season was about the same as when they should be finished with recording and about to go into promoting. The season wasn't bad.

‘Let's use the festivals.’

University festivals were open to everyone. From the people around that area, students from other schools, and even

employees. Many people would come to university festivals to watch youth. It was just that, nowadays, as which celebrity decorates the highlight of the festivals became important, it was increasingly becoming more important whether a famous celebrity came or not. Although, due to this, they were criticized as monsters that ate up tuition fees.

While thinking various things related to the university festivals, one thought came up in KangYoon's mind.

‘Can’t we perform on a street inside the campus during the festival? Not just once... The advertising would be..’

Even while thinking it wouldn’t work, KangYoon’s hand was on the keyboard in order to write the plan proposal.

Chapter 40: Outside, Again!! (2)

It dawned on the day to record The ACE's song.

KangYoon headed to the studio after he finished checking the budget and some other documents. In the studio, Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyun, who arrived first and were warming up their throats, and Director Lee HyunSang.

“Hello.”

“Hello.”

KangYoon made a ‘that’s unexpected’ expression when he saw the person in charge of The ACE, Director Lee HyunSang. He was a director rarely seen inside the company. He wasn’t seen even in the last Directors’ meeting.

“Hello.”

“I think it’s the first time meeting you. I’ve just heard about you. Nice to meet you.”

Director Lee HyunSang was a man in his forties with a short stature. His gentle looking eyes made him look like an amiable ahjussi. He looked very different to the other directors who looked very strong and stubborn.

“Did you warm up yet?”

“Yes.”

“Then let’s begin right away.”

After exchanging brief greetings with Director Lee HyunSang, KangYoon started working. Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyun went into the booth. The current time was 5 p.m. They said that this was the time when their conditions were at their best. This was the time they had scheduled beforehand.

As the equipment was already set, it didn’t take a long time to record. The recording started immediately.

-I like – the warm spring —

When Yoon HyeRin's voice started resounding throughout the studio through the speaker, KangYoon also started seeing white light along with a purple musical note.

‘It's a bit weak.’

The combination of the song and Yoon HyeRin seemed to be okay. However, it felt somewhat lacking. He wanted a stronger light.

“HeRin, shall we try again?”

-Yes.

The producer, who was touching the mixer, also requested for a retry as if he was unsatisfied. One couldn't be full with just one bite. Yoon HyeRin's singing started again.

-I like – the warm spring — the beautiful — you — come to me —

KangYoon shook his head while looking at the recording which progressed. It was because he saw a different colored musical note to the purple colored one from time to time.

“Let's try again. ‘The warm spring’ this part is a bit off.”

-Yes.

The producer also seemed to feel something was off as he requested for a retry.

-I like – the warm spring — the beautiful — you — come to me —

“The front part is okay. Let's try again with a little less strength in ‘beautiful’.”

The producer progressed with the recording.

Although the recording went on, KangYoon kept tilting his head. It should have become better after it became jazz, but strangely, it did not seem to get any better. The weak white light that the purple colored musical notes made kept making KangYoon

wonder. Although it seemed better than The ACE's previous songs, it wasn't at a level he was satisfied with.

As the recording progressed little by little, it was already night when they listened to the halfway version.

"Let's rest for a bit."

At the producer's declaration, the members of The ACE came out from the booth, and went outside with Director Lee HyunSang.

KangYoon had a listen to the recorded file with the producer.

"Can we use this?"

When KangYoon asked, the producer nodded.

"It isn't bad. If we edit it, I think we will end up with an okay song."

"An okay song..."

Although the producer said that, KangYoon was unsettled. The weak white light kept weighing on his heart. KangYoon thought about what the reason could be while listening to the recorded file again and again.

-I like – the warm spring — the beautiful — you — come to me —

-Like — a child — in magic —

The purple colored musical note, and the weak white light. These thoughts kept swirling around in KangYoon's head. He kept wondering which part should be better in order of the light to become brighter.

"JinGyung's voice sounds a little different. Although it's refreshing, it sounds a little sharp."

"It's the characteristic of the microphone she's using now. That microphone is weak in mid pitches and has a strong high pitch. As you said that you're recording in jazz style this time, I have prepared that microphone."

At the producer's words, KangYoon paid attention to the microphones. Perhaps, wasn't it because the microphone had a bad affinity with the singer? The microphone, which affected a singer's voice greatly, was a very important element in recording and in performing.

"Let's try changing the microphone."

"What? I think the current sound is also okay."

"Let's just try it. Are there microphones The ACE's girls used originally?"

"The ACE don't have their exclusive microphones. Those are for people at JooAh's level..."

The producer complained as he didn't like KangYoon interfering with his work. However, he couldn't do anything to him. Although it was somewhat unsuitable to go against the person in charge, he kept complaining. Even while knowing that, KangYoon continued with his claim.

"Change it to an ordinary one. Let's go with that"

".....I understand."

In the end, the producer became dejected while saying that the equipment he prepared ambitiously was rejected.

"It's just an experiment so don't think about it that much. I know that you've worked hard. Shouldn't we try everything?"

KangYoon added his last line. There was no need to kill the morale of a hardworking person. However, hardworking and producing results were a different problem altogether. Grabbing both wasn't an easy problem.

The resting time ended, and the members of The ACE went back into the booth again. As the microphone changed, they had to go through the setting again. After they set the tone, the recording began.

-A miraculous – dream–

Although it was just one line, KangYoon’s eyes widened. The light had become stronger. Although it was the same purple musical note, the light coming from the combination of the notes had become stronger.

‘The microphone was the problem.’

The producer also seemed to be amazed that the controlled tone, different to the previous, sharp tone, as he looked at KangYoon. KangYoon only shrugged his shoulders. The producer started concentrating in work again with an awkward face. As he could hear the suitably adjusted voices from the machine, he could touch the sounds as his heart willed.

-The love-of spring — only deepens–

The recording progressed with lightning speed until the chorus where the two’s voices combined suitably to produce a strong white light. As the purple notes combined to make strong white light, KangYoon was also delighted.

“Is this one alright?”

“Yes, we should have changed it before. I might have ruined the song if we went along with my stubbornness. I’m sorry, Team Leader.”

“Not at all. Please produce a great song.”

At the producer’s bashful words, KangYoon didn’t drag on. His such actions seemed to look better in the producer’s eyes as his eyes shined.

“Don’t worry. I will answer you with the best song!!”

It seemed not reproaching him despite the mistake seemed to be seen well in the producer’s view as his morale rose high. KangYoon just smiled.

“JunYeol-oppa!!

Lee JunYeol, who gave his signature to a female fan who ran up to him as he was about to board the van, passed the notebook back while smiling.

“Kyaaak—!! I love you, oppa!!”

However, the fan seemed to be extreme as she hugged Lee JunYeol tightly. Although it was reasonable for him to panic, Lee JunYeol patted the female fan’s back with a leisurely smile.

“Thanks.”

“Sob sob... Oppa, I love you.”

Although it was reasonable for him to get upset, Lee JunYeol kept his manners to the end without losing his leisurely smile. When he got on the van after having calmed down the extreme female fan, even Manager Yu SeungCheol, who was waiting worriedly inside the van, couldn’t seem to hide his exclamation.

“Wow, hyung. You really changed a lot. The more I look at you, the more astonished I am.”

“Shut up. You can’t even block a fan like that... Oh, dammit all. Let’s just go.”

Lee JunYeol stopped when he was about to say something more. Although he would have gone on a rampage if it was before, he seemed to have become a lot softer as he just passed it off as an accident. Whether he knew or not, Manager Yu SeungCheol kept chatting.

“Hyung, really... You really changed a lot after that time.”

“What is?”

“Your attitude towards the fans changed after you’ve released this album, and even on TV... Hyung, you’re so cool. Ur da best.”

“Shut up, you’re so disgusting, even though you’re a man...”

“Hahaha.”

Although Lee JunYeol was rough to him, Manager Yu SeungCheol knew that this was his way of showing affection. As he knew, he could laugh more.”

After the debut stage on the radio broadcast stage, Lee JunYeol changed in regards to everything. There was no need to talk about his attitude in treating songs, and his attitude in confronting fans and other things all changed for the better. Thanks to that, he succeeded in having a comeback with the evaluation of his voice having changed as foothold while gathering more fans.

“You didn’t set any more schedules like I said, right?”

“Yeah, yeah. It’s the 10th time you asked me that.”

“I have a good impression of you for the first time. You should know that I will flip everything if you did, right?”

“Of course I do. Weren’t you meeting Team Leader KangYoon?”

The van Lee JunYeol was on quickly headed to the café near Shinsa station where they arranged to meet. Manager Yu SeungCheol parked the van on the space where vans could be seen parked here and there, and headed to the café. However, Lee JunYeol stopped him in front of the café.

“I’m going to go alone.”

“Why?”

“Just cuz I want to.”

“Ah, hyung. I know what talk will happen today, and although I also like Team Leader KangYoon, on a story that needs negotiation between the companies, I need to be there.”

“Shut up, I decide. I will tell hyung to cut your salary if you follow.”

In the end, Lee JunYeol went inside alone by force. Manager Yu SeungCheol was about to go in when he gave up while making a bitter smile.

‘Do those two want to go on a date or something? Wait, JunYeol-hyung, don’t tell me...?!’(E/N: ooooooh)

After thinking about absurd things like whether he opened his eyes to a different preference than other people, Manager Yu SeungCheol eventually shook his head. When he thought about it, yesterday, Lee JunYeol played wildly in a club just yesterday.

Inside the café, KangYoon was tackling the some paperwork.

Befitting of a famous café, slim models and sometimes, celebrities, were enjoying their coffee. KangYoon’s figure of tackling paperwork really did stand out amongst them.

“Hyung!!”

“You came?”

While KangYoon was biting the pen as if the work wasn’t going well, Lee JunYeol had arrived. When he raised his hand, KangYoon high-fived immediately. Now, these two had become closer.

After a brief greeting and talking about recent matters, the real topic began.

“Hyung, what’s up? You even called me all the way here.”

“I called you for work.”

“Work? Oho, an event? What should I do? I’m really busy nowadays.”

Lee JunYeol’s eyes contained a playful attitude. KangYoon shrugged his shoulders and continued on.

“If you’re busy, then forget it. I just want to use some of your fame.”

“Oho? The hyung-nim is requesting help from the little bro, right? Good, good. Speak to me about it.”

Lee JunYeol seemed to be delighted as he urged KangYoon.

KangYoon could only smile at the unchanging, ever-lively Lee JunYeol.

“You really don’t change. Anyway, a singer under us releases a digital single this time.”

“Who?”

“The ACE, do you know them?”

“No.”

Lee JunYeol was honest. He was as always – he didn’t know non-famous people.

“...That’s so like you. Anyway, there is a duet singer who didn’t go well even after releasing their second album. We’re releasing a digital single this time, and I want to request featuring from you.”

“Featuring?”

At the word ‘featuring’, Lee JunYeol’s eyes glistened.

“Wow, featuring? Those The ACE kids, what are they like? Are they girls? Are they pretty?”

“...Let’s take it as nothing happened here.”

KangYoon shook his head and stood up. Then, Lee JunYeol grabbed his arm.

“Ayy, hyung. It was just a joke. But what kind of song is it that you even need a featuring?”

“It’s a slow jazz. The singers are a female duet. I need a male voice with a solid, plentiful voice range, and so, I was planning to get your help.”

“You came to the right man.”

Lee JunYeol poked his own chest with his thumb while saying ‘leave it to me.’

“I will pay you properly so you don’t need to worry about that.”

“Hey, don’t be like that between us. You can just make another stage for me another time.”

“...That’s a loss for me though.”

“Kyahahaha.”

Lee JunYeol laughed heartily. KangYoon gave him the USB with the song, and told him the recording schedule.

“So I just need to be there at that time, right?”

“Yes.”

“You came to the right man. I won’t make you regret it.”

Lee JunYeol stood up while saying that there was a schedule. He also paid on his way out. KangYoon also laughed heartily while looking at the brash Lee JunYeol.

‘That’s the featuring taken care of, and now, it’s time to strategize the promotion.’

If it was difficult to go on a broadcast, then he needed another strategy. KangYoon headed to his office to work.

Saturday.

Unlike her friends who remained at school for [self-study](#), HeeYoon, who went home early, met an unexpected person in front of the school gates.

(T/N: Students usually have self-study after school ends, and this is 2008, so going to school on a Saturday was the norm in Korea around this time)

“Oppa!!”

It was her brother, Kangyoon. As she saw KangYoon, who could only be seen late at night nowadays, she ran up to him and embraced him in delight.

“There, there. Is it fine for a fully grown girl to do this?”

“What’s wrong? I don’t have an owner yet.”

After hugging HeeYoon’s thin body once, KangYoon got on the car with HeeYoon.

“Huh? A car?”

“It’s a company car. I came out because of work. Since I’m going to universities, I should show you around.”

“Universities?”

When HeeYoon fastened her seatbelt on the passenger’s seat, KangYoon started driving slowly. Befitting of a veteran driver, who never got into an accident in his 7 years as a manager, the car KangYoon drove had little shaking.

“I think it’s the first time I got onto a car you drove.”

“We will buy a car soon. At that time, let’s go to many places.”

“You don’t have to go overboard. I’m alright.”

HeeYoon always felt sorry for his brother who always tried to do something for her. She kept thinking that she wanted to do something for him too.

The place KangYoon and HeeYoon headed to was a university in Dongjak district. KangYoon, who paid expensive parking fees for the university parking lot, started looking around various places.

“Oppa, why did we come here?”

Was there a need for KangYoon to come to a university? KangYoon said he came here for work, but since he kept looking around the place slowly, HeeYoon was curious about his reason.

“I want to see where the students gather. But since it’s a Saturday, it’s hard to find. Oh, it’s that place.”

KangYoon pointed to a fountain which could be spotted easily from the shops inside the campus and had shades around it. With the fountain at the center, a lot of the people went around, on the

shades, people, who looked like campus couples, were chatting with liveliness.

“Oppa. I think it will be fun to perform at that place.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, quiet music can be heard, and lovers would kiss... Kyak!!”

“.....”

KangYoon lightly smacked HeeYoon on the forehead as she was drift to a mountain.

However, the place HeeYoon mentioned was a good place to perform. KangYoon picked up the camera and took a photo immediately. It was the so called ‘ideal spot marking’

“Oppa, what are you planning to do there?”

KangYoon only smiled at HeeYoon’s question.

“Wow... Is that the library? Look at those people. They must study really hard.”

Eventually, HeeYoon became absorbed in the large facilities of the university and its people. While looking at HeeYoon who was looking at the people with eyes full of envy, KangYoon asked.

“Don’t you want to go to a university?”

“University? Of course I want to go. But you know I’m not good with studying. I don’t even know what I want to do.”

“It doesn’t matter how long it takes you, so try studying. Of course, you know that your health is the priority right?”

“Yeah.”

Although she was becoming healthier, she was far from being completely cured. HeeYoon wanted to become healthy as soon as possible and wanted to have an ordinary life the students there. She also wanted to stop being a baggage for his brother and wanted to share his burdens.

“Let’s go.”

Whether he knew of HeeYoon’s thoughts or not, KangYoon grabbed HeeYoon’s hand and lead her to the car. While going to the next university, HeeYoon fell into thought.

While imagining her own figure, spreading her dreams in a university campus.

Chapter 41: Outside, Again!! (3)

“It sure is disgustingly large.”

In front of the high MG building, Lee JunYeol grumbled. Compared to his small company, this was like a royal palace.

‘Hey, it’s Lee JunYeol.’

‘Whoa! He’s really handsome. But he really is shameless. Why’d he come here?’

When Lee JunYeol entered the lobby the trainees passing by whispered while looking at him. He was a famous star within MG Entertainment in a variety of ways.

“Oh, my ears are so itchy.”

Of course, he couldn’t pretend to not hear it at all. Lee JunYeol was guided to KangYoon’s office on the 5th floor from the lobby.

“What’s all this? Hyung, you work in a place like this?”

As soon as he entered KangYoon’s office, Lee JunYeol clicked his tongue when he saw the papers piled up on KangYoon’s desk and the materials on the shelves. Although a private office was good, Lee JunYeol was already fed up with the countless amount of materials surrounding him.

“You came.”

“Lil’ bro is here. At least serve me some tea?”

KangYoon gave out a cup of tea to the man who shamelessly claimed his little brother. Even so, he appreciated it since Lee JunYeol came here to do the featuring despite his busy schedule.

“You worked on my stage like this too?”

“Kinda, I work like this in the office and I run around on the scene. Planners are all like that.”

“No wonder you’re called the God of Music.”

“Who does that? Bullshit God, I’m a slave.”

KangYoon thought it was absurd and he denied it, but the feeling Lee JunYeol had was different. The amount of work in KangYoon’s office had exceeded his imagination. Originally, he had thought that a singer would rise if he or she just sang well, but in truth, there were people who put in effort to control the variables behind the scenes to make a star rise.

After a brief chat, the two headed to the underground studio. The ACE members, Producer Oh JiWan and the staff were waiting there to watch the featuring.

After setting the microphones inside the booth, Lee JunYeol warmed up his voice and got ready for the recording.

-Hyung, shall we do it immediately?

“Will you be alright?”

-Let’s do it quickly and grab some food.

He seemed to have done a lot of practice as Lee JunYeol requested for the recording straight away. Soon, the accompaniment came flowed out and the recording began.

-You’re — my — only happiness — for — the rest — I — love you —

A purple musical note could be seen from Lee JunYeol as well. His heavy low voice along with the notes intertwined in one place to make white light. However, the light was neither strong nor weak.

“Shall we try again?”

Producer Oh JiWan tilted his head and requested for a re-run. KangYoon paid attention to Lee JunYeol’s singing again.

‘The color of the notes should be constant. If looked at carefully, their brightness are slightly different.’

Although the musical notes coming out from Lee JunYeol was

constant, there were differences in their brightness. Listening, he found out that it was the difference of how much strength he put into his voice. When one verse ended, Producer Oh JiWan tilted his head again.

“It’s a bit strange but I can’t find out why.”

At that moment, KangYoon grabbed the microphone connecting to the booth.

“JunYeol, the ‘I Love’ part here. I think you put in too much strength. Can you sing slightly weaker?”

-Okay.

While Producer Oh JiWan looked at KangYoon strangely, the recording started again.

-You’re — my — only happiness — for — the rest — I — love you —

“Whoa.”

However, the strange gaze to KangYoon turned into a ‘that’s unexpected’ expression. Since the sound became better when he did as KangYoon said.

‘That part became constant. The ACE will do the high pitch sounds to their hearts content, so Lee JunYeol just has to make the lower pitch sounds plentiful. First, why don’t I polish the ‘only’ bit? They’re too close together so in a direction to emphasize it slightly...’

KangYoon got into action right away.

“JunYeol, ‘only’ – this bit, let’s do it a bit stronger. Just slightly, if you do it too strongly, you will eat up The ACE girls’ voices, oka?”

-Okay.

Producer Oh JiWan didn’t stop KangYoon. He had judged that KangYoon’s listening ability was very good. The recording started

again and musical notes started coming out from Lee JunYeol again.

‘Good.’

A strong white light was made from Lee JunYeol. The brightness of the notes, and the color were both constant. This made the light stronger. After recording one verse, Producer Oh JiWan went into mixing with a satisfied smile.

“I think we can use this as is.”

They didn’t record many times. Although the process of recording a song was to record countless and insert the best parts, if the sounds were this good, there was no need for such process.

The other verses, which came after, were the same. Producer Oh JiWan didn’t stop KangYoon. KangYoon requested Lee JunYeol in order to make the notes constant and make the light stronger, and as a result, they could finish the recording without spending much time.

“Whoa... it didn’t even take 2 hours?”

While exiting the booth, Lee JunYeol clicked his tongue, seemingly in disbelief.

“You’ve worked hard. Pros sure are different.”

KangYoon patted Lee JunYeol’s shoulders. However, Lee JunYeol shook his head.

“Hyung, you’re good even with recording. It’s the first time I saw a producer who was so refreshing with his requests. I thought you only did stage planning. I didn’t know you were so good with producing. Hyung, let’s work together for my next song.”

“I don’t know how to control mixers though.”

“What’s wrong with that? We can just call them.”

KangYoon expressed his difficulty. Although he could use a mid

to small scale mixer of 20 channels or less, he had no confidence in controlling if he had met a huge mixer of 48 channels or more. The basics were the same. However, there were many additional functions so there were a lot of things to learn. It was not for nothing that sound engineers and lighting engineers were called professionals.

“I think you can learn to do it in a short time though. Hey, pretty ladies over there. It’s your fortune of a lifetime to work on an album with a person like this. Thank him while kowtowing him a hundred times.”

“Ahaha...”

When Lee JunYeol directed his arrow to Kim JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin, the two laughed awkwardly. Lee JunYeol was eccentric as the rumors said. Not minding them at all, Lee JunYeol left the studio as soon as work ended.

“Hyung, then I’ll be going.”

“Let me see you out.”

When KangYoon was about to see him out, Lee JunYeol stopped him.

“See to your own kids first.”

Lee JunYeol pointed to Kim JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin who were absentmindedly standing behind them. They had become absentminded after looking at the process of recording with Lee JunYeol and KangYoon. It was because they had seen KangYoon’s trustworthy side only heard in rumors.

“Then bye.”

“Ah, hyung!! Wait for me!!”

Lee JunYeol cutely (as he himself saw it) waved his hand and left the studio. Following him was Manager Yu SeungCheol who had no presence as always.

“It really is chaotic with him around. You’ve worked hard in watching. Then shall we...”

KangYoon stopped his words when he was about to say ‘shall we head to the practice room’ to the 2 women. It was because their shiny gazes were a bit uncomfortable.

“Wh... what is it?”

“Team Leader... You were... so cool...”

Kim JinGyung folded her hands neatly in front of her like a little girl in front of a pretty man. KangYoon panicked.

“Wh, what is?”

“How can you point out so accurately... You did the same with our song, right?”

“Y... yeah, that is so.”

Yoon HyeRin wasn’t that much different from Kim JinGyung. Recording was originally a difficult process. A man with leadership was definitely admirable. Different, different – was what people said about him and it really was correct.

“Team Leader... You’re the best.”

“.....”

KangYoon was uncomfortable with the two pairs of shiny eyes so he could only cough awkwardly.

Jung MinAh, who lied on the ground after the difficult dance practice ended, smacked Christie An who was using her stomach as a pillow, as always.

“Hey, get off.”

“Don’t wanna.”

“Ah, really!!”

Jung MinAh growled, but Christie An was chic. Christie An

seemed to find Jung MinAh's grumbles itchy as she scratched her ears.

"Is my stomach a pillow?"

"It's better than a pillow."

"Do you want to fight?"

"Don't wanna."

Christie An was nonchalant even though Jung MinAh raised her voice, so the entire conversation sounded quite off. It was very awkward.

"I heard The ACE unnis were recording nowadays."

When Han JooYeon brought up the topic, Seo HanYu chimed in.

"Them? I heard they were recording with the Team Leader."

"Oooh. They will succeed alright.'

Christie An replied shortly as always and stretched her arms. She looked like she was fed up with everything.

"Christie, is it 'that day' for you?"

"Yeah."

"....."

Only Jung MinAh, who asked Christie, looked like an idiot.

"There, there. Don't fight. Ya should be nice to each other."

"I was only lying down."

Lee SamSoon worriedly spoke to Christie An and Jung MinAh, but Christie was as chic as ever.

"Get up, girls. The teachers are coming."

When Han JooYeon stood up after seeing the trainers through the window on the door, Jung MinAh and Christie An also stood up immediately. The momentary resting time ended like that.

The difficult day of the girls flowed like that.

“I heard the song. Jazz, eh. It might be a dangerous choice.”

Chairman Won JinMoon looked over the report carefully after receiving it. It was very contrasting compared to the smooth sail before.

“I selected the most fitting genre for the singers.”

“Jazz isn’t popular with the public. You should know that only a select few prefer this genre in our country.”

“I think you should know if you have listened to it, but it’s just to the extent that there is a little bit of jazz elements in popular music.”

“Is that why you went for high pitch instead of low? Well, the people do like the screaming sounds. The ACE kids are also good at it too. It was good that you controlled it to be not sharp. However, it’s a pity with the low parts. Heavy female low voices are charming in jazz.”

“The ACE girls cannot digest that voice range. Rather than wasting energy in bringing up what’s not there, it’s better to emphasize their strong points.”

Chairman Won JinMoon was still unsure of the jazz that KangYoon chose. However, when he heard the cover title song which used featuring to supplement the weak points, it was excellent.

“Hm... Yes. You used featuring to cover up the weak points. Well, it’s a stretch to call it a real jazz. Should it be called fusion jazz, if we had to name it?”

Only after hearing the song multiple times did Chairman Won JinMoon accept it.

Although the title song of The ACE was a jazz, it was a stretch to call it real jazz. Although if they went full jazz, they would be able

to gather mania fans, they would lose majority of the populace.

After accepting, Chairman Won JinMoon turned over the page again. However, thinking that something was empty after he had read to the end, he asked KangYoon.

“There’s no talk about the debut stage.”

“There will be no appearance on TV for a while.”

“What?”

Chairman Won JinMoon’s expression turned bad in an instant.

“No TV appearance? The populace has almost no knowledge of The ACE, shouldn’t you expose them to the public and make them known somehow? How are you planning to make them known without a TV appearance?”

“I’m planning to start from the outside.”

“Outside? Are you planning to do some street performance like the Underground people? How much time would that take? Team Leader Lee. I don’t think this is right. Moreover, we may get criticized that we’re trying to stretch into the Underground stages.”

Chairman Won JinMoon’s voice became high. Although there were always risks, this didn’t make any sense. There was no reason for a pair of singers belonging to an entertainment company, and a place which had a lot of money, to clash with poor singers and go to the streets.

Even though he was faced with the rejection from Chairman Won JinMoon, KangYoon calmly started persuading.

“Strictly speaking, it’s not a real street performance. We will be creating a ‘hot topic’.”

“Creating a ‘hot topic’? What do you mean?”

“It will be university festival period soon.”

“Yes. However, there aren’t any universities that will call The ACE. The public just does not know about them.”

Unfortunately, that was the reality. Of course, if it was JooAh, they will use all the money to call her.

“If they don’t call on us, then can’t we go there by ourselves?”

Chairman Won JinMoon was confused the more KangYoon spoke.

“Go by ourselves... However, you won’t be able to stand on the stages. You’re not thinking something foolish like intruding on the stage, right?”

“No way. If all goes according to plan, at the end of the festivals, the universities will call us by themselves.”

“Do you mean that you will do a live business by going there? Hm... Let’s hear about it first.”

Chairman Won JinMoon listened in to KangYoon’s following words.

“We will use two strategies. First, we will go around the universities and do a performance. However, we will do it like an ambush and pull out quickly.”

“What’s the other?”

“Social network. We’ll use the SNS. Recently, Twisser is all the hype. First, we’ll create rumors, and make the people tweet by themselves. This singer, she just sang here, but now she’s there? When did they move? – We’ll create rumors like these.”

“Definitely... The spreading of rumors on Twisser is fast. Was it 140 limit? The characters?”

“Yes. Although the start of the rumor will be the promotion team, the end will be different.”

“... Although there were people who used Twisser for advertising, I have never heard of a successful case due to

commercial potential. It's because there are too many people and we can't predict what may happen. Also, the people using Twisser are also sensitive to information. Will it be alright?"

At Chairman Won JinMoon's words filled with worry, KangYoon confidently replied.

"The most important thing is to do a good performance on street, and make the people spread rumors around by themselves. It's very important to make an 'unintentional' hot topic. There is a nameless singer group going around universities, that group had failed 2 albums. However, that group was singing some kind of jazz like stuff, and the song was very good. Have a listen. – starting with that – Huh? That song's quite good, why didn't we know of it until now? – like this, we need to make rumors spread around. If this becomes bigger and bigger, I think our position will change within one month."

"So in the end, it's back to the textbook. We'll be doomed if the song is bad. If it slips once, then it will be a laughing topic. It might become a soap bubble at once even if we do well. Fuu, as always, you bring me fun and risk at the same time. Twisser has a lot of headwind. You do know that all sorts of things happen in that place, right?"

"I do."

In KangYoon's past, Twisser, or the one which came out later, BookSecret, and such social networks put up a celebrity and brought them down in moments. There was no way KangYoon wouldn't know the dangers of Twisser, when he had seen celebrities committing suicide due to SNS cyber bullying in his past life.

Chairman Won JinMoon heaved a deep sigh. KangYoon's strategy always carried dangers. However, the fruits that these dangers brought were very big.

However, whether it was KangYoon or Chairman Won JinMoon,

they were both people who enjoyed such dangers.

“Do it.”

“Thank you, Chairman.”

“As i said last time, you don’t need to worry about the Directors’ meeting. You have a lot of things to consider, so for a while, please focus on this.”

“I understand.”

After acquiring Chairman Won JinMoon’s approval, KangYoon bade farewell and left the chairman’s office.

‘Phew, so is the action only thing left now?’

The preparations were almost over. The album, and the strategy was all prpared.

While heading to his office, KangYoon resolved to make this album succeed.

Chapter 42: Outside, Again!! (4)

All team members, including the planning team in charge of The ACE's album this time had gathered in the 2nd floor meeting room.

However, all of them were flabbergasted at KangYoon's unexpected first line.

“Whaaat?!”

“Team Leader, did I hear right? You will go to the scene yourself?”

“You did hear it correctly. For this one month, I will directly look after the girls of The ACE on the scene.”

The Chief Kim JoonSeon of the planning team and the liaison team all expressed their awkwardness. No, it wasn't just that. The managers who had to go to the scene became especially pale.

“If Team Leader goes, then we...”

Jung ChanHyung, who had managed The ACE until now, mumbled the end of his line. If KangYoon, the topmost person in charge, went together, then as on-the-scene personnel, they were no different from being monitored. It was natural that they would be tense.

“Manager Jung, you just have to do what you've been doing until now. Just think that there's an extra manager.”

Words were easy, but it didn't sound so easy to the people who would go to the scene. It wasn't easy to work together with the person in charge of them. Of course, KangYoon wasn't a superior who put his subordinates in difficult positions, however, his weight was uncomfortable to all of them.

“Then we just have to focus on Twisser?”

Chief Han JungSeok of the promotion team asked. KangYoon nodded his head.

“Yes. For a while, the promotion team will work under a state of emergency. Please be careful on the monitoring and watch out for the movements of the media. Also, please check if there are any strange rumors going around.”

“I understand.”

“Has the session to accompany the performance been selected?”

At KangYoon’s question, Chief Kwon JiYoon of the liaison team answered.

“Yes, Team Leader. As you said, we had chose two people who can use the djembe and the synthesizer each. They also agreed to the condition that they will accompany us for all the performances for one month.”

“Thank you for your work.”

As there was no comeback stage, there were no work relating to TV stations. However, there was an enormous amount of university performances which substituted for that. Moreover, there was also the real-time monitoring. The album team of The ACE had met a new way of work, different to the work they did until now, so they had gone over the work several times.

“We’re looking at 2 months until the end of the project. It will take 3 months for it to stabilize. At that time, would be in the middle of summer. Let’s succeed and receive a huge bonus and go overseas for holiday.”

“Yes!!”

The meeting ended with KangYoon’s last words. The meeting room had become empty when all the teams left like tide.

‘So it starts tomorrow.’

The new approach made KangYoon resolve his heart again. While looking outside the window, KangYoon resolved that he will do well.

“Eh? Where’s our van?”

Kim JinGyung couldn’t hide her surprise when she saw the tattered green bongo, and not the van they used until now. However, the managers, including KangYoon, were only quietly moving the equipments such as the mixer. Manager Jung ChanHyung answered to her question.

“There won’t be a van for a while. The Team Leader said that we also have to manage our image so for a while, we will use this vehicle.”

“What? What’s this bongo got to do with image?”

Kim JinGyung seemed to be surprised a lot as her voice had also become big. Then, Manager Jung ChanHyung hurriedly stopped her.

“Hey, be careful, we’re in front of the Team Leader.”

“No, but this is no good. No matter how bad-off we are...”

“It’s not that. Even the Team Leader will take the same car as us. You can’t speak like that.”

“However...”

Kim JinGyung was confused. However, she couldn’t say anything as KangYoon loaded the equipment and sat on the front seat without saying anything. Looking at such a figure, she couldn’t say anything and got on the vehicle. As it was full of equipment and the seats were uncomfortable, she wondered what happened in just one day.

At that moment, KangYoon spoke.

“The audience will look at everything that we do. Not only the songs, the process of setting the stage, movement, and actions. It will be bad for our image if we go around in vans when we’re doing street performances, right? Think that you’re cosplaying realistically and please endure.”

“Oh... Yes.”

Finally, Kim JinGyung seemed to have understood as she exclaimed. Although she was very picky with vehicles, if this was the reason, then she had no choice but to accept.

“We’ll suffer altogether. Let’s do our best. If you adapt well like HyeRin, then you will be able to endure.”

On the place KangYoon pointed towards, Yoon HyeRin had fallen asleep with a travel pillow. Kim JinGyung laughed awkwardly and opened the window. She started putting in effort to adapt to the smell which was coming off the car.

The first place KangYoon and company arrived at was D university in Seongbuk district. KangYoon and company who parked the car inside the university with an expensive fee, got off the car while carrying all the equipments. Moving around a little, there was the spot that Kangyoon and HeeYoon had found together.

“Are we performing there?”

Yoon HyeRin pointed towards a plaza where a garden was formed with big trees. KangYoon nodded his head.

“Yes. Let’s start setting.”

With KangYoon’s orders, the girls started setting the equipment. The djembe and synthesizer session who had followed them, also got into position with their instruments.

“Wow, is there a performance today?”

“Who are they?”

“I dunno, but they are pretty.”

The people seem to take interest in the plaza performance which they hadn’t seen before, and said a line each. The students who were resting not far away also seemed to be curious seeing the setting, as they didn’t go away.

“Wow, people are looking at us!”

While handing the microphone wire to KangYoon, she turned her head towards the people. She was curious of the people looking at her. Nobody recognized her even when she went around the streets after releasing her 2nd album. However, as people’s gazes were gathering on them unexpectedly, she found it new.

KangYoon didn’t make the volume too large. Since even though it was the festival period, there were plenty of people who were in lectures. He set the volume of the recording, and after he set the microphone on the djembe, he set the synthesizer sounds. Quite a lot of time had passed when the entire sounds were set.

“Huh? Is that a performance?”

When the recording, the djembe, and the synthesizer jammed in accompaniment, people started gathering to watch. Especially, people’s gazes were gathered a lot on the djembe which made a refreshing resounding sounds. Following that, when a clear sound came out of the synthesizer, more people gathered. The university was noisy due to it being festival period, but the live music sounds seemed to be attractive.

‘The djembe sounds are a little bit rough.’

Including the black musical note from the djembe, and the pink musical notes of the synthesizer, a different colored note was being made when the sounds were changed. This sound was making white light after being combined with the recording. KangYoon controlled the mixer. He increased the low pitch sounds on the microphone installed on the djembe and he decreased the mid-pitches of the synthesizer to make useless noises disappear. Then, he increased the overall volume to produce a plentiful sound. Then...

‘This will do.’

The musical notes coming out of the instruments combined to

make a strong white light. Now was the vocals' turn.

“Aaah — Into the sky —”

“Woow.”

A small cheer erupted while they were setting the microphone. Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyun started becoming excited when they heard the cheers they hadn't heard even on stages.

“Ah, I...”

Kim JinGyung, who grabbed the microphone to answer to the cheers, was about to say something to the audience. At that moment, KangYoon spoke.

“JinGyung, let's finish this off first.”

“Sorry?”

“Let's set the microphone first.”

The singer on the stage had to lead the mood and not be swayed by it. KangYoon suitably held back her excited emotions. Kim JinGyung remembered the line she had heard until she was fed up, while training, then she paid attention to KangYOon.

“Into the sky— My heart—”

Kim JinGyung's strong acapella melody resounded across the plaza. The violet musical note was making a strong white light. Following that, Yoon HyeRin also set the microphone with the same part. KangYoon controlled the machine after looking at the weak light from the musical note.

“Into the sky—”

“Waaaa.”

When the two's voice resounded across. The gathered people showed a bigger reaction than before. Although the cheers became bigger, this time, Kim JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin didn't get swept by it. While looking at them, KangYoon focused in setting the

sounds.

“They’re not bad. Wooow.”

“Unnis, you’re pretty!!”

Although some of the audience joked around, Kim JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin’s concentration didn’t sway. KangYoon also focused on them while looking at the situation.

The only thing after setting all the sounds was a jam. At KangYoon’s signal, they started playing.

“I will confess — to the you — in my — heart —”

When the exciting jazz-like melody resounded across the plaza, the people around started gathering for real. An exciting music, and the beautiful voice – these weren’t things that could be seen easily in universities.

‘The light is strong. It’s good but I should...’

When he decreased the volume of the instruments, the light became stronger. The overall balance had matched. When the sound matched, KangYoon was satisfied.

‘Good!!’

The setting was finally over. KangYoon, who looked around to signal that the performance can begin, widened his eyes in shock.

‘What the hell? Why are there so many people?!’

He expected that there would be about 100 people at best. However, a huge circle was formed with KangYoon and company as the center to the point that the streets couldn’t be seen. There were at least 200.

‘Team Leader...’

Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyung also seemed panicked at the number of people which were above their expectations. Although they weren’t a lot compared to a big stage, this was the first time

they had met an audience this close. It was natural that they felt that it was more.

Seeing that the two women were panicking, KangYoon stood up and approached them. Then, he quietly whispered.

‘HyeRin, JinGyung.’

‘Yes, Team Leader.’

‘I will take responsibility for the aftermath no matter what happens. So go and sing to your hearts’ content.’

‘.....’

Was there some kind of magic in those words? Yoon HyeRin’s and Kim JinGyung’s hearts calmed down like a lie. KangYoon had calmed them down whenever they were about to waver. His words contained power.

The ACE, the girls heaved a deep breath and started doing what they prepared.

“Hello. I’m Kim JinGyung.”

“I’m Yoon HyeRin. Nice to meet you.”

“Waaaaaaa—!!!! Hello!!”

The reactions of the audience which erupted along with the greeting was very passionate. A moment ago, when they heard the band and the girls’ voices, they were both exceptional. The gazes of the people who gathered in expectations were all shooting ‘sing quickly’ rapidly.

“We’re not good with words. So we’ll just start singing.”

“Hahahaha.”

Kim JinGyung’s honest words without any decoration made the people laugh. Honesty seemed to be more charming to them than useless comments as the people opened their ears were giggling.

KangYoon saw that the girls were ready and played the

recording.

This was the beginning.

While KangYoon and The ACE should be in the middle of their street performance in D university.

MG Entertainment promotion team was under an emergency.

“Are you tweeting?”

Chief Kwon JiYoon of the liaison team were putting all their connections into use along with the employees, tweeting. From their juniors in D university to their parents-in-law and even 8th-in-kin, they used all their connections – this much was obvious. They also tweeted using their main and sub accounts that there was a street performance in D university.

“Chief, a photo came up. Huh? This is our performance.”

Employee Lee ARa showed everyone the photo one of her followers had posted. In the photo was the rehearsal of The ACE and below them were many people.

“Wow, Twisser sure is good for advertising.”

Chief Kwon JiYoon muttered while looking at the photo that one of his followers posted. Her follower seemed to be interested in the djembe as the photo was mostly about djembes and the tweet asked what this instrument was. The followers all replied to her question.

“This is quite effective, isn’t it?”

Vice-chief Yu MinSeon seemed surprised while looking at the number of followers. There was no need to mention the number of comments, and even the shares of the tweet were increaing rapidly in number.

“Share it too. Vice-chief Yu, don’t forget to write a report to give to the higher-ups.”

“Yes!!”

The promotion team was watching the situation while tweeting.

Although they were full of praises until now, Twisser was a place where something unexpected could fly in their face, anytime, anywhere. They didn't let go of their tension and watched the situation.

“Thank you.”

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa——!!”

The 4 songs that The ACE had sung had gone by in a flash.

The cheers from the people who watched were huge. A performance unseen in schools was jumping in on the bandwagon created by the festival to produce a synergy effect. Moreover, their pretty appearances also played a crucial role. The people gathering increased by the moment and the cheers also became bigger.

‘It seems it’s in the middle of spreading around.’

KangYoon felt the power of social networking while seeing that more people were gathering. From far away, he could see that a person holding a phone was running this way with a phone in hand. It was obvious that that person had come here after looking at Twisser.

The white light coming from The ACE’s performance was affecting the audience positively. The strong white light gave the people joy, and they grabbed on to the people tightly.

“This will be our last song.”

“Boooooo—.”

Yoon HyeRin’s words made the audience truly disappointed. Kim JinGyung, who felt pity in that, looked towards KangYoon while hoping that they could do more, but he shook his head. Then, she also nodded her head in understanding.

“Instead, we’ll sing something we haven’t sung before. Although, it’s a bit embarrassing.”

“Waaaaa—!!”

This was the signal that they will sing the title song, ‘The Love of a Spring Day’. KangYoon nodded in understanding and prepared. The sessions also started preparing. The djembe player fixed position and the synthesizer player set the sound.

“Although it might be a little unfamiliar to you, please take it well.”

When Kim JinGyung politely bowed down, the accompaniment began along with the applause from the people.

The djembe produced a clear atmosphere with its sounds, and the bouncy piano sounds from the synthesizer resounded out in all directions.

-I like the warm – spring day — the beautiful — you — come —

Kim JinGyung started singing first. The calm jazz, but rhythmical song made the people wave subconsciously. KangYoon was nervous while looking at the white light that the musical notes were making.

-The love — of spring — only deepens —

And the following part by Yoon HyeRin, the white light was becoming deeper and stronger. The light permeated through the people and made their expressions happy.

And...

-The miraculous – dream–

The two made harmony, and the rhythm gathered more joy. With that, the light from the stage became stronger. When KangYoon slightly reverbed the sound, the light gathered more power and gave more effect to the people.

“Whoa, this song is so good...”

“Who are they? They’re so good.”

Starting with the people who photographed them with their cameras, there were some who were searching, people who were cheering – people had different ways of enjoying the performance. However, they were all the same in the fact that they enjoyed it. Unlike until now, this was something they had heard for the first time, but the cheers of the people didn’t know how to die down.

‘So this is singing!!’

And Kim Jingyung’s and Yoon HyeRin’s heart became full of emotion while being contact with such an audience’s cheerful smiles up close.

Defeating the demon known as the ‘encore of the people’, KangYoon and company barely escaped D university. They put away the equipment in 10 minutes and were coming back to the car when they saw a parade of people lining up to receive a signature.

“Ah... Team Leader. What do we do?”

“Give them.”

KangYoon even held onto Kim JinGyung’s stuff now. Perhaps they were charmed by her feeble appearance and powerful voice as male fans lined up in front of Kim JinGyung.

“Ex... excuse me. Can I have your phone number...?”

Of course, there were such fans. While Kim JinGyung was laughing awkwardly, Yoon HyeRin stepped in.

“Sorry, this girl has a boyfriend.”

“Oh, okay...”

When they set off after defeating the sudden ‘hunt’ and the signature parade and got on the van, the girls felt that their bodies were exhausted. Although the performance was fun, they felt that energy was being drained from their bodies.

“Well done.”

“Thank you for your work...”

In the front seat, KangYoon was looking at the performance list.

“Let’s go to Seongdong district.”

“Are we going to K university?”

“Yes.”

At the road manager’s words, KangYoon spoke of the next destination. Then, the road manager started driving quickly on a fast road.

“Eh? There’s another one?”

At those words, Yoon HyeRin got surprised and abruptly stood up.

“I said, didn’t I? That we need to go around at least 2 places per day.”

“Nuuu...”

Perhaps because the reactions of the people were good, Yoon HyeRin had expended all her strength. She was already so tired, but there was another one... However, she didn’t have the guts to retort to KangYoon.

“Team Leader, I’ll sleep for a bit...”

“I will wake you up when we arrive.”

In the end, Yoon HyeRin chose sleep. Kim JinGyung seemed to have already fallen asleep as she didn’t budge a little bit.

‘At this rate, it won’t take as long as I expected. We got off with a good start.’

After looking at Kim JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin sleeping at the back once, KangYoon directed his gaze to the papers in front of him.

Chapter 43: Outside, Again!! (5)

Before every regular Directors' meeting, Chairman Won JinMoon receives a report from the directors about the celebrities they are in charge of. Their results, their plans for the future, etc – he received reports on these kind of things and would approve or disapprove them. This was his main work.

Today also, he got angry and shouted at the directors who reported almost no achievements in the 1st quarter of the year, before meeting the next one.

“Hm? It's President Lee, This should change my mood.”

Due to the round of being angry just now, Chairman Won JinMoon's face had become red. President Lee HyunJi thought that she should be careful in her actions while giving the report.

“Min JinSeo? Yes, Min JinSeo can be looked forward to.”

In the end, Min JinSeo was taken by Chairman Won JinMoon. It was nonsensical to make one of the directors, who fought like crazy over her, be in charge of her. KangYoon tried to prepare for a takeover for Min JinSeo, but in the end, he couldn't do it and eventually, it was decided that she would be taken care by the Chairman himself.

“Good. Please report. I heard the drama will end soon.”

“Yes. Currently, the average viewer ratings have calculated to be 34.2%. As the drama had a smooth sail, Min JinSeo's acting ability also was paid attention to, and due to that, there are all sorts of calls to the liaison team.”

“That's a superstar right there. Let's wait a little more. Is there a commercial that came in?”

“Many kinds of things are coming in, but we're thinking of starting from the Youth Campaign Video made by the Police.”

“I understand. Even so, do proceed if there are any cosmetics commercial. In my opinion, it will come soon.”

Hearing the report about Min JinSeo, Chairman Won JinMoon was filled with smiles. As expected of the hottest rising star recently, Chairman Won JinMoon rejoiced whenever there was any talk about her. It was a positive effect on the company shares, and she was a young star who would last long – Min JinSeo was literally a lump of fortune.

“Did you write up an official contract?”

“Yes. Team Leader Lee told me over and over again. Since there wasn’t any temporary contracts, there weren’t any complicated processes. We’ve put in good conditions to the point that she wouldn’t think of leaving even when the recontract season comes.”

“Well done. We should give out when we could.”

Chairman Won JinMoon was satisfied after looking at the copy of the contract.

Finishing a few other reports, President Lee HyunJi’s report also ended.

“Then I’ll take my leave.”

“Thanks for your work. Oh, do you use Twisser nowadays?”

“Sorry?”

At Chairman Won JinMoon’s words, President Lee HyunJi made an expression of questioning. Then, Chairman Won JinMoon smiled.

“Aiii, you’re as stiff as ever. If you have the time, install Twisser and look up The ACE.”

President Lee HyunJi bade farewell and left the Chairman’s office. Although she did receive a report from KangYoon that they were advertising The ACE through Twisser about their street

performance, she hadn't checked it out with her own account. She didn't like SNS that much.

Even so, it wasn't like she couldn't do nothing after listening to Chairman Won JinMoon's words. She immediately turned on the computer in her office and went into Twisser. After registering, she searched 'The ACE' on the search bar.

'Whoa...!!'

President Lee HyunJi widened her eyes due to the pressure of the number of tweets made by countless people. Although they were short lines, everything was directed at the street performance by The ACE.

-How was the performance in D uni? Sho gud. Jazz-like songs ftw...

-Those two appeared in I university. So pretty, they're goddesses.

-They also came to Y uni. The prof came out to complain since it distracts class, but he ended up singing together, lol.

-The songs are so good. I want to buy their albums but there aren't any T^T.

All of these people were those who left a tweet after looking at the street performance in universities. Of course, there were also some bullying comments.

-The ACE? Didn't these guy ruin themselves after releasing an album? What street performance? Lol, look at them cosplaying lolololololololol.

-Does the company not give them any money? Is MG insane? Lolololoolololololololol

-I fought with my BF cuz of these girls. Bitches! I'm your anti-fan starting today!!

-Didn't these girls dance strangely? I made some memes, such a pity.

President Lee HyunJi didn't know that time was flowing quickly due to reading all those reactions from the people. Was there any time that The ACE had attracted so much attention from the people? They released 2 albums, appeared on TV, appeared on news articles, and all sorts of media, but there wasn't even a dot in the comments, or even cyber bullying comments, not to mention good comments. However, now that so many people showed a reaction, she was interested.

‘Pfft, split up with your girlfriend just because you want to see The ACE? Aren't you insane?’

While looking at Twisser where nonsensical comments were flying around, President Lee HyunJi kept being absorbed into it.

“Wow...”

Kim JinGyung couldn't hide her surprise while looking at the people who were gathering to watch her while she was carrying the microphones.

“Don't you think there are more than last time?”

When Yoon HyeRin whispered to her while looking at the people following them, Kim JinGyung nodded in agreement.

“That's what I mean. I think there are more as time goes.”

Even while setting up, people took pictures with their phones, shouted, and even urged them to start quickly. As the number of people increased, the reaction became explosive. It was a massive change that occurred in 3 weeks.

“Give me the line.”

“Oh, yes.”

However, KangYoon didn't flinch even though they had received such an attention from the people. He ignorantly received the lines from the girls and only did his work. It was because when even the sessions were being exciting, if he also got excited the performance

might go to a mountain. As the one who has to lead the team, he had to be cool headed at all times.

S university's plaza was a large opening with a bronze statue. As this was the junction between many different departments, many people could see the girls of The ACE.

“When does it start?”

“I want to to watch quickly!!”

Even while setting the sounds, there were some short-fused people who were urging. The girls smiled while consoling the audience while setting. When the first such reaction came out, Both Yoon HyeRin and Kim JinGyung panicked, but now, they could ask for patience while smiling.

Sometimes, there was a case where an audience stepped onto the stage, but at those times, KangYoon stepped in. He lead the excited audience well. Thanks to that, Whether it was The ACE or the sessions, they could all focus on their performance.

This street performance team had already made a massive wave.

“Hello!!”

“Waaaa—!!”

When KangYoon signalled, Yoon HyeRin excitedly waved her hand towards the audience. The performance had begun. The plaza was already full with the people who gathered while they were setting up.

‘The sound may be too small.’

KangYoon was worried whether the performance of the speaker would be able to keep up or not. The sound will definitely be small at the back, and loud at the front. The plaza was already full with people. KangYoon focused on setting the balance delicately.

The members of The ACE didn't say much. They went into singing not even 1 minute after they started – This also came up as

‘their characteristic’ on Twisser. They were known as being sincere to performing.

-The winter came out a sound — but I want the spring to —

As Kim JinGyung’s and Yoon HyeRin’s performance ripened. The light that could be seen in KangYoon’s eyes also became brighter. The musical notes from them and the instruments were making a harmony. However...

‘I knew it. It doesn’t spread that much into the back.’

When KangYoon looked, the light couldn’t spread to the audience at the very back. The output of the speaker was already at the limit. If it became any louder, it was sure that a howling would occur, and people would cover up their ears. However, the people at the back who could neither see nor hear The ACE’s singing, kept trying to leave.

KangYoon wanted them to stay. He wanted more people to enjoy the performance.

‘Let’s decreased the middle register and...’

First, he decreased the overall middle register. Then, the musical notes coming from everyone became slightly weaker. At that time, KangYoon increased the volume.

‘Good.’

When he did, the light started reaching further. The light had acquired strength. Even the people who were about to leave, when they could hear the sound properly, they all turned their gazes to the front and raised their phones. Taking pictures or going on Twisser, people were trying to enjoy this moment in their own ways.

“Thank you.”

“Kyaaaa—”

A massive cheer reverberated across. At those sounds, Kim

JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin's could feel joy welling up in their hearts. The other sessions, too, seemed to have become slightly excited as they enjoyed this moment while bumping their fists.

“Then the next song...”

When Yoon HyeRin was about to signal KangYoon, a man wearing a pair of horn-rimmed glasses walked through the crowd and walked on the stage.

“I'm sorry in the middle of your performance. Please give me a little, just a little bit of your time.”

“What is it?”

Yoon HyeRin first calmly replied back. Even though the audience was jeering at him, he calmly approached them. He didn't seem like an ordinary trespasser. KangYoon also stood up just in case something happened.

“I'm Jung GwanSeok, the student council president of S university. I came here since one of the singers for tonight, had punked out, and I urgently needed to invite another one.”

“Waaaaaaa!!!”

The audience who jeered at him, thinking he was a trespasser, started cheering him, who showed a reversal.

“Festival!! Festival!! Festival!!”

The member of The ACE didn't know what to do. In fact, although they did hear about it from KangYoon, they felt unrealistic now that it came down to it.

When they looked towards KangYoon for help, he raised one finger. This meant to bounce back once. The girls who realized straight away, held up the microphone.

“Ah... I don't think we have the qualifications to stand on a festival in S university.”

At Kim JinGyung's words, the audience became chaotic.

“What do you mean!! Qualifications!!”

“It’s sufficient!!”

“Sufficient!! Sufficient!!”

It was instead, the audience, who were leading the atmosphere in excitement. Yoon HyeRin spoke while looking at Kim JinGyung. No, to be exact, she ‘pretended’ to speak to her.

‘Is this enough?’

‘I don’t think we should bounce them back anymore.’

After negotiating, Yoon HyeRin held up the microphone.

“Then, please take care of us.”

“Waaaaaaa——!!”

An enormous cheer reverberated around the audience. Matching the performance, Kim JinGyung spoke.

“Then we have to end it here so we can meet later, though.”

“Booo... such a pity.”

“We can do just one more.”

“Waaaa—!”

From some time, the girls were playing around with the audience’s hearts.

“Please take care of us.”

The student council president, Jung GwanSeok finished the conversation about the night performance in the festival and left.

“Team Leader, how did it go?”

When Kim JinGyung asked in curiosity, KangYoon answered.

“We settled for a total of 4 songs. However, I think we need to do one more. No, think of it as 6 songs. Ok?”

“Yes. I should manage my voice properly...”

While saying praiseworthy words, Yoon HyeRin put the equipments inside the bongo. Today, they had no need for these equipments again. The djembe and the synthesizer was already on the stage, so they had nothing to do with these equipments anymore.

They had some time until the rehearsal, so they rested when KangYoon's phone started ringing loudly. It was a call from Chief Han from the promotion team.

“Yes, Mr. Han. What is it?”

-On Twisser, it says that The ACE is participating in S uni's festival.

“You're correct. Is there a problem?”

-I called you since there were some strange words about the event costs. It's becoming a hot topic how The ACE will use their event costs.

“The event costs? Well, all sorts of things happen in Twisser. We were going to give it out as scholarship anyway. Please spread it around on Twisser immediately.”

-Then does that mean there is no profit for the company? People will say that you have made no achievements.

“We will be in the red for a while anyway. The time we make profit will be when The ACE goes on TV, and when various events would start coming in, so it's alright.”

KangYoon gave out the order and ended the call.

‘I heard people turn green in envy when the neighbor succeeds. The event costs aren't much anyway...’

Looking at those people who get fussed up over just 1 million won event money...(≈870 USD) KangYoon shrugged his shoulders.

Befitting of a ranked festival in the country, S university's singer lineup was quite magnificent. However, there was a problem.

‘They are all on the first day and the last day?’

In the waiting room behind the stage, KangYoon shrugged his shoulders while looking at the order of sequence. Today was the third day. For some reason, due to a punk, The ACE, took that place.

“Ah, I’m so nervous. University, eh.”

Yoon HyeRin couldn’t take her hand off her pounding chest. She felt more nervous about this stage than the TV stages. The light clothing from their street performances were all but gone. She changed completely into stage costumes. The tight and short one piece which exuded a sexy beauty was enough to attract people’s gazes at once.

“Team Leader...”

Kim JinGyung wasn’t that different either. She couldn’t take her hands off her phone. It seems she was consoling herself with Twisser. Twisser was full of people making cheerful comments such as ‘I will definitely go and watch’ and the like.

KangYoon calmly spoke to the two nervous women.

“It’s not that different from the audience from a while ago. It’s just that the stage is a little bigger.”

“.....”

“You will do well.”

KangYoon’s words contained strange power. His words instantly calmed down their nervous hearts. This power came out from the trust that he had showed them by supporting them wordlessly and protecting them. Whether it was Yoon HyeRin or Kim JinGyung, they were thankful for KangYoon’s such actions.

“It’s time.”

With his words, the girls left the waiting room and went to the back of the stage. On the stage, was a band performance by the

university club.

‘The musical notes don’t combine completely.’

KangYoon sat on his seat which was prepared. Looking at the bad, he could see musical notes inside the white light. The brightness of the light was weak, although there wasn’t any grey, it was very different to the fusion that he had saw from stages done by professionals.

The audience too, only the ones at the front were cheering with their hands raised. The reaction became sparse as the distance increase. There were some who blatantly did something else. It was an effect due to the light not reaching there. KangYoon also, found it very boring.

“Thank you.”

Although the band club bade farewell and left, KangYoon couldn’t clap. No, he did, forcefully. He resolved himself that he wouldn’t show such a performance to his audience.

“...Next stage. We had a hard time bringing these people.”

A short comment, then was the girls’ turn.

“I introduce to you. They’re the goddesses on Twisser. The ACE!!”

“Waaaaah—!! The ACE!! The ACE!!”

Along with the deep voice from the presenter, The ACE showed themselves on stage with their slim legs. They had always worn jeans in street performances, so this kind of change made the audience fall into a pit of passion.

-You above — all are my precious — happiness —

With a simple greeting, when The ACE’s song began, the audience’s hands automatically rose into the air. The slow tempo jazz song resounded across the venue and KangYoon could also see purple musical notes dancing around.

‘The sound is too sharp.’

KangYoon headed to the engineer’s seat immediately.

“I’m sorry but can you decrease the high tone for Iris’s microphone?”

“Is this fine?”

The engineer started controlling the mixer on KangYoon’s request. As they didn’t rehearse beforehand, they couldn’t set it to match the singers. It wasn’t easy to set while listening to the song itself.

“Please add a little bit of low tones for HyeRin. A little more, that’s too much. Just a little...”

When the musical notes from the two people became clearer, KangYoon gave an ok. The engineer also seemed surprised when he heard the sound coming from the speaker, which satisfied him.

“That’s a good sound. You have good ears. Are you perhaps an engineer?”

The engineer seemed to have a lively personality as he actively spoke to KangYoon. KangYoon comfortably received him.

“No, I’m just an ordinary employee.”

“It’s not easy to set it like this on scene... I thought you were an employee from an auditorial company.”

The engineer knew instantly after seeing that the singers were comfortably focusing in singing on the stage. That this setting was the optimal. He saw KangYoon in a new light.

KangYoon, who came back to his seat, focused on their stage again. They became better in their street performances and now, they were completely in hold of the stage.

-Your — heart — is my —

The light in the venue became stronger. Going past KangYoon to

the end of the audience seats, the light was spreading. As their harmony became better, the light became stronger and the musical notes also became stronger as well.

And at the peak.

-Ahh— I love you- forever — forever —

The light peaked. The harmony of Kim JinGyung's high voice, and Yoon HyeRin's low voice made a magnificent sound. The slow, but rhythmical djembe and the piano which added to the jazz mood, made splendid sounds and decorated the voice.

“Hey, hey... This is a concert...”

“sob sob... Fan day one for me.”

The audience was about to explode. KangYoon, who looked at the responses of the people nervously at the front, heaved a sigh of relief.

‘Phew. We are over one hurdle.’

KangYoon was relieved.

The white light permeated through the people and The ACE's singing met its end along with the cheers of the audience.

“Thank you.”

“Waaaaaaa————”

Incomparable to the street performance they did until now, a huge cheer reverberated S university.

Chapter 44: Outside, Again!! (6)

[The ACE, rises as a hot star of university festivals.]

The group The ACE (Members – HyeRin, Iris : real name – Kim JinGyung) have risen as a hot star of university festivals.

They rose as a hot icon of university festivals, after a series of events of getting love calls from K university, G university and more, after they had an event in S university in Seoul with over 1 thousand audiences (estimates from S university student council). A different jazz-styled song and friendly stage manners, and pure and cute appearances have been estimated to take a role in making a storm on the internet.

The group, The ACE, debuted in October 2005 with their first album ‘You’re within me’, but...(omitted)

.

(omitted)

.

The ACE has told the media that they will donate all the money they received as university scholarship, so they became even more popular with the title of ‘Thoughtful Singers who Care about University students’ who have difficulties with the expensive tuition fees.

-Quick news, Accurate news, News without manipulation, reporter Rangin.

“Huh... huhuh... huhuhuh...”

Chairman Won JinMoon didn’t know what to say after he read the report given to him by KangYoon.

‘Should I kill this guy, or make him live?’

Chairman Won JinMoon always praised KangYoon, but

currently, he was thinking such things, which was rare.

“KangYoon, no... Team Leader Lee. Y... yes. Phew, phew. No matter how low of an amount the money earned from uni festivals are... scholarship... Well, it’s only 5 million won (≈ 4350 USD)... Yes. Please tell me the reason. Why did you do that?”

All the event costs, thrown at the scholarship!!

Thanks to all the money thrown away as scholarship money, Chairman Won JinMoon was dumbfounded, no, even his heart was pounding. He let KangYoon be in charge of everything so he couldn’t say anything, but he thought this was no good – his head was hurting.

“It’s an advertisement.”

“Advertisement? Well... Advertisement Isn’t it fine if we painted the SNS with their names?”

“It’s insufficient.”

“Insufficient? If it’s according to your plan, you made them known with the street performances in universities, and you even made them stand on university stages. Even if you want to donate some, you could have gave a proportion, but all the money? Moreover, you should have consulted the company about things related to money. Your thinkings were short in that.”

“As far as I remember, all the things related to The ACE is within my authority.”

“That’s true but... Sigh.”

‘All’ things related to The ACE was in KangYoon’s hands. His words were right. However, 5 million won was hurting so Chairman Won JinMoon couldn’t say nothing. Of course, it wasn’t anything large compared to the event costs MG Entertainment earned in a single event, but even so, if it was 5 million won earned by The ACE, that was different.”

“Chairman. The reason I donated all the event costs as scholarship money is to draw a bigger picture.”

“.....”

Chairman stayed silent and flipped over the report. It was, in a sense, a rebellion. However, ironically, in the report were KangYoon’s plans after the donation. Chairman Won JinMoon calmed his heart down and read on.

“...In the end, it’s the cost to build a positive public opinion?”

“Yes. There were quite a few bad public opinions due to the reason that the singers who performed on the streets, The ACE, were from MG Entertainment. If we take the event costs, we might even get some adverse effects. This small amount of money is instead, poison.”

“Small amount of money, you say. Do you mean you have something bigger you’re aiming for?”

“Shouldn’t I turn the loss into profit?”

KangYoon confidently started talking about his next plans.

The season of festivals, May, had passed and summer came.

Although it was a season where clothes became shorter and eyes were blessed, to some, it was a ‘hot’ season where the amount of steam from one’s body increased.

“Hey,hey..... Don’t stick to me. It’s damn hot.”

Jung MinAh grumbled to Christie An who, as always, rested her head on her stomach. Due to the aftereffects of harsh practice, her body was full of steam. However, Christie An didn’t seem to mind, and rested her boiling head in to Jung MinAh’s thin waist.

“This is mine.”

In the end, Jung MinAh couldn’t win against her. No, she accepted her. It was a trace of her efforts to learn ‘leisure’ from Lee

SamSoon.

“Huh? It’s Team Leader.”

When everyone was resting, KangYoon entered along with Ailee. Everyone had to get up from their comfortable lying positions.

“Just lie back down and listen comfortably.”

KangYoon also sat down himself. The girls all sat down. Of course, there were none who lied down.

“Today, I came with some good news. You should have some holiday right?”

Then, everyone’s eyes shined brightly.

“Holiday? Holiday?”

Jung MinAh showed the most fierce reaction. KangYoon smiled at her cuteness.

“It isn’t efficient to practice every day. You should rest a bit.”

““Yay!!””

All the girls said hooray in joy. In truth, to a trainee, a holiday was very rare. Even if they were given one, most of the time, they would spend it in the practice rooms. It was because they thought that if they rested, they might get taken over by the other trainees.

Of course, there was no way KangYoon wouldn’t know of this.

“Your holiday is one week. You will rest in turns in 2 groups. The first group is MinAh, HanYu, Christie; The second group is Ailee, SamSoon, and JooYeon. You will rest in turns for one week so please set your schedule well. Let’s match the time with your school holidays and... Let’s take a rest in the 4th and 5th week of July. You will have to rest so don’t even think about staying at the company.”

“Can we switch groups?”

Han JooYeon asked.

“Do whatever you want. However, you have to rest in groups of 3.”

“Yes!!”

At the talk of the joyful holiday, everyone’s expressions became brighter. Until now, they practiced without any holidays. 1 week was a huge amount of time. The girls all started chatting about what they should do in their holiday.

However, Ailee, who was quiet all the time, poked KangYoon’s waist carefully.

“What is it?”

“Can... Can I go to America during that time?”

“You can. You can do whatever you want. Just come back in time.”

“Yes!!”

When KangYoon’s permission came, Ailee’s expression, which was unchanging even at the word ‘holiday’ until now, became brighter in an instant. She was excited just thinking that she would meet her family at home. Although the holiday may be short considering that she will have to go to and from America, she was happy that she could go at all.

He left the practice room as he was done with all his business here, but Jung MinAh followed him out.

“Ahjussi.”

“Team Leader.”

“...Yes, yes. Team Leader, aren’t you going on a vacation?”

At Jung MinAh’s question, KangYoon replied after thinking for a bit.”

“I don’t know. Shouldn’t I be able to go after this work ends?”

“The work with The ACE seonbaes?”

“Yes. Why?”

“It, it’s nothing. Then are you going with your little sister?”

“I think so. What is it?”

“It’s nothing.”

Jung MinAh hurriedly went back to the practice room like that.

“What’s up with her?”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders after looking at Jung MinAh’s inexplicable actions and headed to the liaison team office.

When KangYoon came, the liaison team was raining with phone calls. On one side, they were receiving the calls, and on the other, they were making a list.

“So this is the list of the current calls for The ACE.”

KangYoon muttered when he looked at the list that Vice-Chief Kang JoonYoung made, seemingly satisfied. Vice-Chief Kang JoonYoung spoke carefully.

“Yes. The calls related to The ACE are... are about that.”

“Hm... In your view, how is it?”

“Sorry?”

“Do you think there is any TV programmes that The ACE should appear on?”

Vice-Chief Kang JoonYoung panicked at the sudden question. He never expected that the topmost person in charge, KangYoon, would ask him a question directly. However, he soon sorted his thoughts and spoke.

“Most of them are entertainment programmes. ‘Running Idol’, ‘Beauty of Challenge’, and such big ones are coming in, but it’s a question whether The ACE would do well in such programmes. Oh...”

Originally, one had to speak positively to one’s superiors who

were much further up the ladder. Vice-Chief Kang JoonYoung, who realized what he had just said, hurriedly closed his mouth.

“I... I’m sorry. Without even being aware of my position, I...”

“Not at all. I also think the same.”

“Sorry?”

“First, please politely reject the TV programmes. Also, accept those centered around music programmes at night. How are we on the chart?”

“We’re within the top ten.”

“How long were we up there for?”

“For 2 weeks.”

KangYoon nodded his head in satisfaction. After the release, they were outside the top 100, however, after the street performances, they ran in reverse and now they were within the top 10. The power of SNS was frightening.

“Team Leader!! A call from the producer of Canvas.”

While KangYoon was talking with the liaison team, suddenly, a new employee spoke.

“Canvas? That’s KDC’s music concert.”

While the new employee was getting an earful from his seniors due to raising his voice, KangYoon calmly sorted out the situation.

“Accept it. However, you have to acquire enough time for 2 songs and an interview.”

“Yes!!”

The liaison team obeyed KangYoon’s orders.

And 2 weeks later.

The ACE participated in the biggest music concert of KDC TV station.

Before the recording of Canvas, in the waiting room.

KangYoon looked for Yoon HaNa, who was in charge of presenting in Canvas. As singer, and actor, she showed a lot of musical knowledge, but with a clumsy presenting and cute appearance, she was a woman who had a lot of charm. Of course, unlike the clumsy appearance, she was famous for being picky...

“HaNa!!”

“Oppa!!”

However, KangYoon was unrestrained with her as he had known her for a long time.

“KangYoon-oppa!! It’s been a long while!! I heard you were doing well nowadays? How are you?”

“Well, I’ll live. HaNa, how are you?”

“Do you think I’m going as well as when I was with you? Ah, I don’t like my current manager. He’s the 4th, the rest all quit.”

“That’s because you’re picky.”

“Huuuuh? Picking on each other now?”

Yoon HaNa acted mad while hitting KangYoon’s arm. Of course, she was playing around. She seemed delighted in meeting KangYoon as her expression was bright.

“But you came to greet? How about the kids?”

“They’re undergoing makeup.”

“The ACE? You came with them right? They were all the rage in Twisser nowadays. I also tweeted.”

Yoon HaNa showed KangYoon her phone. Her phone was fully tweeted with the news of The ACE’s street performance. There were also, all sorts of photos of them.

“There’s a photo of you here, too, you know? Look at you controlling that mixer. Lol. Look at that huge head. giggle”

“What the hell is that expression.”

KangYoon conversed delightedly with the acquaintance he hadn't met for a long time. In KangYoon's manager days, she was a rookie, and KangYoon was a manager with experience. Thanks to that, KangYoon helped her out a lot. It was no wonder that Yoon HaNa had a positive attitude to him.

Taking back her phone, Yoon HaNa went into topic.

“I know why you're here. You're here to lobby me to look after them, right?”

“Lobby, you say... Well.. it's not wrong. Also...”

“Also?”

KangYoon didn't hide it. To an honest person like Yoon HaNa, it was only poison to hide it. When he requested one thing to her, Yoon HaNa nodded immediately.

“You're good since you're honest. My manager's always ‘no cuz this’, ‘no cuz that’... Just how many excuses does he have... It's good to end it with a single line, right?”?

“Not everyone is like you.”

“Ah, dammit all. Anyway, I'm going to switch him.”

Exposition, Rising action, Climax, Falling action, Manager out.

Yoon HaNa delightedly insulted her manager. KangYoon just calmly listened and he went to the waiting room after that. Since his requested was as good as accepted anyway.

The rehearsal ended, and the real recording came.

KangYoon took one of the frontmost seats that the programme director had gave him. It was a good seat where he could see the musical notes the band and the singer emitted, very well.

‘Was that singer called JiWon? I think his musical notes are trembling a bit.’

He could see that red notes were slightly trembling while looking at the song and the dance. Moreover, when the trembling musical note combined with the instruments, it didn't mix in properly. However, perhaps due to the dance being okay, the light wasn't weak. However, it wasn't that satisfying.

'It's probably better for that singer to just dance. Why live...'

While looking at the singer called JiWon, who showed a very fierce dance, KangYoon shook his head. Looking at the audience, an applause mixed with pity could be seen.

After the singer, JiWon's, song ended, Yoon HaNa continued.

"Thank you for your song. The song this time, is from the group who are very famous in universities nowadays."

"Ohhhhh—"

There was no way that the audience who knew all who were coming today, wouldn't know who was next. Yoon HaNa started raising the audience's expectations.

"They are also people who have donated all their event costs as scholarship money."

"Waaaa!!"

Everyone cheered at this point. The recording venue of Canvas mostly had university students as audience. Everyone reacted with a seal-like applause when they heard 'scholarship'.

"I spoke for too long. I think it's the first time we've seen them in TV broadcast. I introduce to you!! The ACE!!"

With Yoon HaNa's flashy voice, the lights became darker. The spotlight shone the center of the stage and Kim JinGyung, and Yoon HyeRin, who were wearing china-dress like clothes with one side of the legs slit, appeared.

"Wowwww—!!"

The cheers with the seal-like applause covered the venue and the

title song, 'Love of a Spring Day' started.

“Bwahahaha!! So what, you gave the person who intruded on the stage a candy and made them turn back?”

Conversation time after one song ended.

When Yoon HaNa asked a question relating to stage intruders, Yoon HyeRin answered shyly and laughs erupted.

“Lol, one candy, eh... it seems like that person was quite... ‘pure’. Can I ask you what kind of person...”

“He looked a little over 30.”

“That’s...”

“After that, I always keep candy in my pocket.”

“Everyone, if you want candy, then go look for Miss HyeRin of The ACE.”

When The ACE told an episode of their street performance, the audience laughed and The ACE also was joyful. Music opened their hearts and the talks about singers all made everyone joyful.

‘This is a good reaction.’

KangYoon was satisfied looking that everything was going according to plan. Now, there was one thing left.

-Hyung, I’m ready.

While KangYoon was focusing, a message arrived on his phone.

-OK.

KangYoon replied straight away, seemingly having prepared something.

“Now we have to let The ACE go.”

“Boooo-.”

The audience boo’ed as ever. However, Yoon HaNa shook her

hand and spoke her prepared line.

“However, I heard that they prepared something special today for everyone.”

“Waaaaa—.”

The audience, of course, very like the word ‘special’. Yoon HaNa set up the mood.

“You can look forward to today’s stage. It’s The ACE’s stage. ‘Lovers of a Spring day’.”

With a clap, the lights became dark again. With the slow, but rhythmical piano playing, Yoon HyeRin’s voice started resounding across the stage again.

-I like – a warm spring — The beautiful you — to me —

The audience started concentrating on her voice. If the previous song was bouncy, this song was a song with an emotional slow tempo, and jazz elements.

-Like — a child — under magic—

And when Kim JinGyung’s voice flowed on the stage, the people started reacting. The song went from start to middle.

‘Now they’re doing well.’

The purple musical notes and the musical notes from the instruments weren’t things that KangYoon worried about. When they mixed well and emitted a strong white light, the people were all waving their hands. The girls were slowly conquering the stage.

The 1st verse ended, and the 2nd verse.

The harmony flowed, starting from Kim JinGyung, to Yoon HyeRin, and the crowd’s cheering increased again. The reaction wasn’t that different to the previous verse.

However, the change occurred on the climax after the chorus. Another spotlight shone on the stage. There...

-You're- my — only happiness-

Was a male singer who received the girls' voices. The male singer, with a weighted low voice, and livened up the mood of the song, he was...

“It's Lee JunYeol!!”

“Lee JunYeol?!”

“Kyaaak!!”

Matching the cheers of the audience, the three spotlights on the stage shone on the three singers equally. Along with that, the magnificent moving lighter added to the magnificence and the song started flowing into a climax.

-For- the rest — I — Love You —!!

Man and woman. When their sounds harmonized, all the audience stood up from their seats. It was a perfect harmony.

‘Good!!’

KangYoon gripped his fists. Lee JunYeol's musical note and The ACE's musical note harmonized perfectly and that was producing an enormous quantity of white light. The light permeated all 500 people of the audience equally and everyone raised their hands.

Today, requesting featuring from Lee JunYeol, who was also appearing on Canvas, played a crucial role. This song also, was a song which Lee JunYeol featured. This was a stage produced with meticulous calculation.

KangYoon was assured that a different future would be in front of the girls when today's stage would be broadcasted. They would be reborn as a true popular singers, surpassing singers who were on the internet and on streets.

-I — Love — You —

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaa—————”

“Kyaaak!! Lee JunYeol!!”

“The ACE!! The ACE!!”

When the song ended, a massive cheer which shook the entire stage, rang in KangYoon’s ears.

The ACE and Lee JunYeol, who were on stage, felt their emotions welling due to the effects of the stage.

Chapter 45: Ties Bring With It A Fraud (1)

Although KangYoon would usually never go to somewhere like a Director's office, today, he had a reason to. It was because [Director Lee HanSeo](#). Unlike usual, KangYoon headed there with empty hands.

(T/N: Author's being inconsistent again... He was originally called Lee HyunSang in the previous chapters.)

At Director Lee HanSeo's office, KangYoon tasted a high-class tea that Director Lee HanSeo himself had brewed.

“The fragrance of the tea is good.”

“It's Junshan Yinzhen I bought when I went to China last time. Please.”

Director Lee HanSeo was a tea maniac. The yellow colored tea had a deep fragrance and it was faint. Even KangYoon, who had no interest in teas, became emotional due to the deep, fragrant tea he had never even smelled before. He could instantly realize that it was very precious.

“To receive such tea... Thank you.”

“To boast, it's a precious tea with the only 300kg produced per year. Of course, it's nothing compared to what Team Leader Lee had done... The fact that you made the girls of The ACE stars, I won't be able to forget.”

“Oh no. I didn't know this was such a precious tea. Thank you.”

When KangYoon thanked, Director Lee HanSeo smiled slightly.

Director Lee HanSeo brewed a tea he acquired with difficulty and had only one packet of, to KangYoon. This meant that he had truly received a lot from KangYoon. Chairman Won JinMoon, no, even when higher people than him came, he wouldn't put out such a treasure, but he didn't feel any loss.

Perhaps due to the good fragrance, KangYoon emptied it in an instant. Director Lee HanSeo filled the empty cup again and calmly spoke.

“After they appeared on Canvas, I didn’t think Team Leader Lee will prepare for a takeover that fast. Looking at the achievements now, they were mostly supposed to go to you..... I was honestly surprised.”

“My work has ended. Even if I keep them, I would only repeat the things I have done until now. If they stabilized, it’s natural to send them back to where they were.”

Director Lee HanSeo honestly exclaimed in his heart. Also, he had a question. The heart to inquire and the heart to appreciate were in one place. As a person with such a style couldn’t be seen in the company until now, he was surprised the more he found about this person called Lee KangYoon.

Whether he knew this or not, KangYoon just continued on with his words.

“As far as I know, Director also cared a lot about The ACE. However, your voice within the company is quite weak... Oh, I’m sorry. I said such...”

“It’s alright.”

Director Lee HanSeo didn’t deny KangYoon’s direct words. KangYoon made an awkward smile and continued.

“Honestly, as far as I know, you have less authority compared to other directors. I don’t know what the reason is... Anyway, I think the lack of power and the lack of support from the company affected the planning for The ACE.

“I should have looked after the weak points and pushed through with the strong points, but I didn’t – This is what you mean, isn’t it? Team Leader Lee’s words are right. I understand now.”

“Now the foothold was made. The other directors now won’t be

able to do anything to you anymore. Please lead The ACE well for them to sing good songs.”

KangYoon had no more words to say. He felt like he was letting go of the kids that he had raised. However, he thought that Director Lee HanSeo would do well and left no attachments.

Director Lee HanSeo waited just in case KangYoon had any more words left, but KangYoon only enjoyed the fragrant tea. The clean fragrance and the refreshing taste that the Junshan Yinzhen gave him made him feel that this was the best tea he had ever drank. While looking at KangYoon immersed in the taste of tea, Director Lee HanSeo confidently spoke.

“Next time.”

Director Lee HanSeo declared while pouring the tea into his empty cup.

“I will become your help, Team Leader.”

“I will wait for such a day.”

“Of course, it’s different with President Lee.”

“Hahaha, okay.”

While the clean fragrance of the Junshan Yinzhen was filling the office, the two enjoyed their leisure.

Kim JinGyung and Yoon HyeRin were going through a busy summer.

After the duet performance with Lee, JunYeol was broadcasted on TV, not to mention music broadcasts, appearance requests for entertainment programs, and even cameos in dramas overloaded them. A commercial was, of course, there too.

It was a miracle that KangYoon had made not even 3 months after he started working with them.

“Ah... I’m so tired.”

Kim JinGyung was now resting her body on the travel pillow inside a van, not a bongo, which they both got attached to.

“JinGyung, your hair will become messy.”

“Ah, dammit all. JunHee-unni. Do my hair later.”

Kim JinGyung who ignored Yoon HyeRin’s advice fell into sleep just like that. The forced march of 2 hours of sleep every day was not easy for them as they had nothing to do for a long while.

“Oppa. Didn’t you see Team Leader Lee yesterday?”

Yoon HyeRin asked the road manager who was with them. He was the road manager who worked with them all the way from the time they performed in university, and he drove the bongo.

“You haven’t heard yet? From today onwards, we’re under Team 2 instead of Team Leader Lee.”

“What?”

Yoon HyeRin’s voice became higher, and due to the lightning out of the blue – like sounds, Kim JinGyung, who was sleeping on the back also woke up.

“What do you mean, oppa? The team what?”

Even at the slightly rude words, the road manager spoke without much reaction.

“Now we’re back to where we were. I also knew because I was notified yesterday. We’re returning to the 2nd planning team.”

“Ah...”

Yoon HyeRin was dumbfounded. Kim JinGyung also thought it was absurd as her body was trembling. They had a feeling of assurance when KangYoon was around them that they would be fine with anything. However, now they won’t be able to enjoy such assurance... From the two people, disappointment, and complex feelings could be seen as they sighed.

“Then will we become as we were before?”

When Yoon HyeRin asked again with a slightly higher tone, the road manager shook his head.

“No way. The schedule is no different than the past. It’s just the person in charge changing. For details go to the Team Leader.”

“Ah... what the hell is this.”

From Yoon HyeRin, the normal smiling face disappeared, and an expressionless face colored her expression. She wanted to fly higher now that they became popular, but now, she was just fed up. Kim JinGyung wasn’t that much different.

Since even murderous intent was flowing inside the van, until the van arrived at the destination for the next schedule, no one could talk to those two girls.

President Lee HyunJi called KangYoon to her office after a long time. It was the first time since KangYoon had started working with The ACE so that was 3 months.

“It’s been a while since we met here, right?”

“I never knew the presidential office would look new to me.”

“It’s even more now that your hands are empty, Team Leader Lee.”

As there were no papers waiting for approval, KangYoon’s hands were empty. The two exchanged brief words and sat down

“I heard the achievements related to The ACE. You also prepared the takeover quite fast. Rather, it’s the directors who are being surprised. They are all saying whether you have ulterior motives.”

“People act according to their values.”

KangYoon only prepared the takeover at the time he thought was right. Just that was enough to make the directors be noisy... They were strange creatures.

“Before Team Leader Lee came, Director Lee HanSeo came. He left after promising to support whatever Team Leader Lee does in the future.”

“That’s thankful.”

“He said that he did say that he will help, but it didn’t seem to get across, so he came back. He was embarrassed to say it himself so he came to me. Middle-aged men were all shy people, eh? Was the teatime between men good?”

“Yes. I received some precious tea.”

“Director Lee HanSeo’s tea love is quite famous. Even the Chairman goes and robs them some time.”

At the indirect confession just now, President Lee HyunJi giggled. KangYoon only shrugged his shoulders.

When the mood became light, President Lee HyunJi coughed awkwardly and switched topics.

“The work with The ACE you did will give you wings in whatever you do in the future, Team Leader Lee. Not to mention intra-company career, it will even have an advantage when you work outside. The company also now acquired an advantage that we have a planner with good ability. We might even send you alone for exterior work, Team Leader.”

“Yes, President.”

“Do you want anything? Not some reward money naturally prepared by the company, if you have anything else, speak about it to me. Money is of course, okay.”

At the wish, KangYoon fell into thought for a little. Now, the method to dig him deeper was out of date to be used on him. In other words, this meant for him to say his true wish.

“May I think for a little bit?”

“Please do.”

After receiving some time from President Lee HyunJi, KangYoon fell into thought.

‘I want to use the power to see musical notes more properly... but I can’t say this...’

KangYoon thought of the weapons he had in his arsenal. Those were that he knew the future; and that he had the power to ‘see’ music from a singer or instruments, and how they become when they combine. The experience he piled up until now and the fact that he knew the future, and the power to see musical notes – he used these until now, but it was unsure if it would work in the future as well.

‘The future I know and the future to come will be different by a large margin. Min JinSeo and The ACE, and singer or celebrity I will meet in the future have their future changed again.’

He had no guilt that he was changing the future. He thought that the future was something to be made with one’s own hands anyway. He only thought that he was in a slightly advantageous situation. The important thing now was to prepare for the different future than the one he knew. In the end, the conclusion was that he had to use the ‘power to see’, but KangYoon thought over and over about what the method would be.

‘In the end, songs are about sound. Wait, musical notes are just music. Then, if I learn music... Ah!!’

At that moment, there was a streak of lightning that flashed in his head. He subconsciously clapped his hands.

“It seems you thought of something good.”

President Lee HyunJi urged him to answer while smiling. Then, KangYoon calmly spoke of his wish.

“Music, in other words, harmonics. I want to learn harmonics.”

“What? Harmonics?”

At the completely unexpected answer, President Lee HyunJi was absent-minded for a bit before she burst out laughing.

“Hahahahaha!! Hamo, harmonics? Hahahahaha!!”

“President...”

“Hahahahaha!! I, I’m sorry. But, my stomach hurts, hahaha!!”

Perhaps she was stupefied by KangYoon’s words, President Lee HyunJi laughed for quite a while. Her laughing-chord was quite strange. Like that, she laughed for a long while before stopping. After returning to her calm self, she coughed awkwardly and spoke.

“Harmonics, it’s too unexpected. Oh, sorry for my rudeness. It wasn’t like I was making fun of you.”

“Not at all.”

“It’s not a difficult request. There is a professor at an arts university that I know. It will be September soon so the term will begin. How about sitting in or a private lecture?”

“Sitting in, you say?”

KangYoon, who thought it would be video lectures at best, was surprised at President Lee HyunJi’s scale when she said university. He also wondered if he could catch up university lectures. Moreover, even though it was sitting in, he also doubted that he would be able to attend the class frequently due to him being busy. President Lee HyunJi spoke first as though she knew his worries.

“A good seonbae of mine is a professor at Hallyeo arts university. He holds a harmonics basics class this semester, so it would be good if you listen to that. I will tell him beforehand so just sit in, and you can go to him privately if you miss any. Building up relations with the students in an arts university, and personally, it will be a good experience for you. For the fees, I will take care of it so you don’t have to worry.”

“Thank you, President.”

“This investment is a sure thing for someone like Team Leader Lee.”

President Lee HyunJi called straight away and asked that person to accept a sit-in student starting September. The person over the phone seemed to have okayed straight away as the phone call wasn't long.

Like that, KangYoon would commute to the university, which he had no relations at all with in the past.

“HeeYoon!! Why do you have so much luggage?!”

KangYoon was stupefied at the number of luggage that HeeYoon brought. His sister packed various things while saying ‘it’s necessary’ so now the amount was well over 2 travel cases and a full backpack.

“We’re going for 2 days and 3 nights. I only put the ones absolutely necessary as you said.”

“...Just the necessary stuff was enough to fill 3 bags?”

Just how much stuff do women need... KangYoon was dumbfounded. The only thing KangYoon had was a single backpack. Three sets of clothes, three pairs of underwear. Skin lotion and such basic cosmetics and medical products. That was it.

“I still have a lot that I’ve left out. I didn’t bring any book to read in the car and...”

“.....”

He wanted to ask her if she was moving houses, but he couldn’t go there.

“We’re going to a pension house. A pension! There’s also a car. You just need clothes or cosmetics and such personal items. Of course, medical products too.”

“Whew... I really did pack only the necessary things...”

“HeeYoon. Are you going to wear this dress at the sea?”

“.....”

When KangYoon took out a dress full of lace, HeeYoon looked away.

“What, you brought an entire bottle of shampoo? I already said that there are such things over there too. Also, how many hats is this? One, two... 10?! Are you planning to wear all of these?!”

“Heheh.”

KangYoon picked out the useless luggage from the travel case that looked like HeeYoon brought her entire room over. Starting with the clothes that looked like she had emptied her closet, to other products, he left 3 days amount and took out everything.

Of course, HeeYoon was all over the place saying it won't do.

“Oppa, this will be insufficient...”

“There's everything there. There's even the market.”

“Hiin...”

In the end, KangYoon, who successfully reduced 3 bags into one, left the dejected HeeYoon and loaded the luggage into the car. HeeYoon, who was dejected for a moment, also got in the car.

“Are we going for real?”

“Then are we going for fake?”

“It's like a dream. A travel... If it's [TongYoung](#), that's where Hallyeo's capital was right? I heard it was really pretty there.”

(T/N: TongYoung is on the south coast of Korea, 376km from Seoul.)

Sick, no money, and such reasons – these made the two not be able to travel. However, today, they would solve such a wish.

“Let’s depart!!

With HeeYoon’s excited voice, the car that KangYoon drove headed to TongYoung.

Chapter 46: Ties Bring With It A Fraud (2)

Now that HeeYoon's dialysis was done, KangYoon and HeeYoon headed towards the pension house they reserved in Tongyeong. As there was no congestion on the highway, they could have a relaxing journey.

“Oppa, ahn~”

HeeYoon even put boiled potatoes that they bought at the highway service area into KangYoon's mouth while he was driving, and talked about her school life. The sibling's car journey was very lively.

“Recently, JooAh keeps calling me.”

“JooAh does? Why?”

“She said she will release an album soon. Maybe due to that, she keeps asking me if you're free. Even if I ask her why she doesn't say the reason too. Oppa, there isn't anything between you two, right?”

“Stop there. I don't wanna get cuffed.”

At the word 'something', KangYoon snorted as if it was absurd. No matter how early she started her job, was there any way KangYoon would see a girl who's less than 19 years old, as a woman? Although he had no clear preferences, he didn't want a girl much younger than him.

HeeYoon seemed to be interested in her brother's preferences as she kept asking.

“Aren't there any good women at your company?”

“I'm busy with work. How about you? Don't you have a boyfriend?”

“How would I have something like that...”

“Why? How is my dear HeeYoon? She's pretty, her body is... oh,

not that.”

“Oppa!”

KangYoon slightly dissed her, but the lively car journey was lively as ever.

As KangYoon was busy with The ACE’s album, he couldn’t care for HeeYoon a lot. This always weighed on his mind. Even so, now that they were on vacation like this, and could talk to each other a lot, KangYoon thought it was fortunate.

The car they were on soon got through the toll gate, went to a normal road, and soon, they arrived at a traditional market.

“Let’s buy something to eat at the pension.”

“Oppa, I want maeuntang!”

KangYoon went on a tour through the traditional market with HeeYoon. HeeYoon seemed to be curious about the live fish as she kept screaming ‘kya kya’, and the store owners also burst out laughing when they saw her.

KangYoon bought a lot of ingredients for maeuntang, and some meat and headed towards the car.

“Are we going there right now?”

“Shall we look around for a bit before we go?”

KangYoon and HeeYoon went on a drive. Tongyeong was a place with lots of attractions. Various tour spots, islands, foods, etc – KangYoon and HeeYoon enjoyed their tour while going around various places.

When the two arrived at the pension house after they enjoyed their tour, the sun was setting. After parking the car at the parking lot, KangYoon and HeeYoon were guided by the owner of the house and they unloaded their luggage.

“Wow, this place is so good!!”

HeeYoon exclaimed while looking around the rooms. Moreover, in front of the house, the sea could be seen, and there was even grass on the yard. It also had three clean rooms, a clean sink, and a clean bathroom – overall it was a comfortable pension house. The scale was large to the point that it was spacious for just the two of them

“Then please enjoy your time here.”

The owner didn't speak any useless words and left immediately. He seemed to have misunderstood. Both KangYoon and HeeYoon just laughed it over and started preparing dinner with the ingredients they bought at the market after they put them in the fridge.

“Ah, I'm full!!”

After eating to her heart's content, HeeYoon tapped on her full stomach. She stretched her arms and looked at the dark sea and thought that 'this was leisure'. As she felt that this was the first 'leisure', peace subconsciously overtook her heart.

‘Oppa said he will sleep...’

KangYoon seemed tired from the driving as he went to sleep right after dinner. In contrast, perhaps due to the excitement of the journey, HeeYoon was lively.

‘Should I, take a walk?’

HeeYoon, who felt good after listening to the waves, went outside. While walking the quiet seaside while getting hit by the wind, she felt that she had become a poet.

‘I'm happy.’

The cool wind scattered her long hair. She felt like even her heart was being refreshed. For some time, things that she would have never even imagined in the past were happening. Only up to a few months ago, the thought that she would walk on the beach while

getting hit by the wind was another person's story for HeeYoon. However, to think that it had become her story... HeeYoon was just happy.

HeeYoon was humming due to her happiness when she heard a guitar sound coming from far away.

‘That’s a good sound.’

The guitar sound mixed with the wave sounds flowed into HeeYoon's ears. She could see a girl sitting on a not far away rock, playing the guitar. Was she attracted to the girl's figure under the faint light? HeeYoon slowly headed that way.

“Even — if you don't — come to me — I'm alri...”

The girl playing the guitar seemed to have noticed HeeYoon's presence as she stopped her hands and put down the guitar.

“Who?”

“Oh... It's just... The sound was so good...”

The girl and HeeYoon seemed to be around the same age. She was on guard against HeeYoon who was in the dark. Her gaze made HeeYoon surprised. Looking up close, it was sure that they were close in age. A small face, a small stature, and the cute face shone by the moonlight. The classic guitar she was holding seemed to be bigger than her.

“Oh... Really?”

“Yeah.”

The girl seemed to be weak to praises as she smiled at HeeYoon's words.

“Sit.”

The girl, who just dropped the polite speech to HeeYoon, handed a cardboard box to her. When HeeYoon sat down on it, the girl started playing the guitar again.

“I’m at this place — holding a small flower —”

Unlike her small stature, her voice was very husky and had power. HeeYoon was curious as to how such a small body produced such a voice. She had exceptional guitar skills in HeeYoon’s eyes. The nimble hand movements and the melody captivated HeeYoon in one go.

“I’m — here —”

“Wow—”

When the song ended, HeeYoon clapped her hands. The girl seemed to be embarrassed as she coughed awkwardly while looking away.

“You’re so good at singing.”

“Anybody can do this nowadays.”

“You look awesome though? It’s like you’re a singer.”

“.....”

At HeeYoon’s repeated praises, the girl blushed a little. However, the words she spoke were completely opposite.

“I said I’m not. I should do something else.”

Even so, a smile never left the girl’s face. Her hand movements seem to reflect her shyness as it had become even faster. If the previous song was a ballad with a slow tempo, this song had a fast tempo.

HeeYoon clapped and went into audience mode. The moonlight stage was very romantic.

“Hmm...”

When KangYoon opened his eyes, the surroundings had already become dark. After he went outside the pension house, he realized that HeeYoon wasn’t here and called her immediately.

-Yes, oppa.

“Where are you?”

-The nearby sea.

“Sea?”

-Yeah, if you come out for a bit...

KangYoon immediately started running after he heard where HeeYoon was. A feeble girl going out on a pitch dark night made him shocked.

However, when KangYoon went to the sea, he realized that HeeYoon wasn't alone. There was another person next to a figure looking like HeeYoon. There was also a light that he could see.

‘A performance?’

He listened in to find that it was a guitar. Although weak, white light could be seen. KangYoon went to that place immediately.

“Lee HeeYoon!”

“Oppa.”

As KangYoon came here hurriedly, the guitar sound stopped.

“How can you come out alone? You should have come with me.”

“It's just for a walk...”

Before HeeYoon could say anything, KangYoon poured all kinds of scolding remarks on her. Starting with ‘what are you doing when it's so dark’ to ‘contact me next time’, KangYoon didn't seem to see the guitar girl in front of him, as he didn't stop speaking until HeeYoon accepted it.

In the end, when KangYoon felt that HeeYoon had accepted, and ended his scolding, HeeYoon introduced the guitar girl to him.

“Oppa, this is a friend I just met now.”

“A friend?”

“I'm Park SoYoung, hello.”

She made a friend in this short of time? KangYoon slightly panicked. However, as she was HeeYoon's friend, it wasn't a bad thing. A friend of the same age was, of course, a good thing for HeeYoon. KangYoon greeted straight away and heard the story of what happened until now.

"...Are you an applied music major aspirant? Composing at that?"

"Yes. It's noisy to practice at home so I come out like this."

Park SoYoung said the academy for music was too far away and lived apart from her family. As she couldn't make any noise at her dorm, she was practicing out here on the beach. HeeYoon was someone who she met at that time.

"Composition eh... You're walking on a difficult path."

"Yes. They do say repeating 2 or 3 times was the basics so I should do my best."

An indescribable feel of a musician could be felt from Park SoYoung. It was a similar atmosphere to the unique aura of a person who does music or arts. There was no way KangYoon would not know that indescribable feeling.

"I wish you luck."

"Thank you."

When KangYoon was about to turn back, HeeYoon grabbed him.

"Oppa, I want to stay a little more."

"....."

HeeYoon seemed to like Park SoYoung's song as she didn't plan on standing up. There was also that she didn't want to be apart from a friend she had just made. As KangYoon had lost to HeeYoon, he also had to sit down. Although the audience became two, Park Soyoung didn't seem to mind and started playing again.

KangYoon also started seeing the musical notes and the lights.

‘It doesn’t harmonize that well.’

HeeYoon was clapping in excitement, but KangYoon couldn’t think of it as that good. It seemed like an original composition, but the musical note coming out from Park SoYoung and the one from the guitar didn’t mix well. Due to that, the light was very weak. However, it wasn’t gray.

‘Well, I don’t need to say it to her.’

KangYoon wasn’t that generous. It wasn’t work, so he didn’t want to overdrive his brain on vacation. KangYoon also lightly clapped along with HeeYoon and enjoyed Park SoYoung’s singing.

‘Why do the musical notes not harmonize well? Is there a problem in the song? Or is the problem in another place?’

Of course, work disease couldn’t be helped.

“Thank you for your teachings.”

“Let’s see in 2 days.”

Park SoYoung hurriedly left the academy. It was to take the bus home. Although she received a lesson and practiced right after school, but time has always been insufficient. Although she wanted to practice more, to take the bus home, she had to leave at this time.

She bid farewell to the teachers and left the academy.

She was waiting at the bus stop in front of the academy when a handsome man wearing a suit approached her.

“Miss Park SoYoung?”

“Who is it?”

Park SoYoung was on guard against the stranger since it was in the middle of the night. As she heard that there were violent crimes against women on the rise nowadays she even had some defense items on her.

“Sorry for meeting you late at night. If it isn’t now, I couldn’t meet miss SoYoung so I inevitably surprised you. I saw you from when you were in the academy, and I think you have talent..... I’m this kind of person.”

The man was very smooth. He skillfully dispelled Park SoYoung’s guard and gave her his business card.

[MG Entertainment Liaison Team Chief Oh ChiSung]

Park SoYoung received the business card and carefully looked at it. The logo of MG Entertainment came to her eyes. The high-class and clean business card mesmerized her eyes.

‘No, no, why me?!’

However, she couldn’t dispel her guard completely. She knew very well that there were all sorts of strange people nowadays.

“I’m sorry, but I cannot believe you just from the business card.”

“You’re right. Should I show you my employee card then?”

The man presented her with his employee card. After she saw ‘MG Entertainment Oh ChiSung’, she couldn’t believe it anymore. Employee cards in the form of cards were made so that it was hung over one’s neck. There was even a photo in the middle,

Park SoYoung seemed to have accepted as she gave the card back. As he had earned her trust, he smoothly continued speaking.

“I’ve seen your practice in the academy. Your voice was very good. I think you have the talent so I’m approaching you like this. Oh, you know The ACE? Those girls were also scouted from academies like this.”

“Oh... really?”

Park SoYoung was becoming seduced by the man’s talk. The hottest celebrities nowadays were obviously the girls of The ACE. Those two girls who transformed from dance to jazz, brought with them a massive wave in street performances, university festivals

and such.

“Originally, we also select our trainees through the regular audition, but we also move around the Liaison Team to recruit talented people and make them debut. People who are selected through this have a higher chance to rise up than the trainees selected through auditions.”

“Really?”

“Yes, and in my opinion, you, miss Park SoYoung, has that possibility. A high one at that.”

“I’m... like that?”

“Although I can’t say it with 100% certainty, it’s above 70%. Small height but an unexpected voice and a guitar to boot. If we wrap those up properly, then you will become a great star.”

Park SoYoung was subconsciously being dragged by the words of this man called Oh ChiSung.

KangYoon woke up late, which was rare, and he had nothing to do.

He ate brunch and walked around the beach, watched TV and slept – this was his day.

‘So happy...’

However, KangYoon was very happy with this day. As this was the ideal vacation of a company employee, he had no regrets. There weren’t any calls from the company, and there was no paperwork for him to check over, so this was heaven. This was a thankful vacation which made him realize why resting was important.

HeeYoon said she wanted to watch Park SoYoung’s playing and left the house after breakfast. They seemed to be getting along well as she didn’t come back that often. Thanks to that, KangYoon could spend the day leisurely while rolling around on the bed.

HeeYoon came back late in the afternoon.

“You’re back?”

“Yes, oppa. Something amazing happened.”

“Amazing? Did something happen?”

When KangYoon sat up, HeeYoon still looked excited.

“You know? SoYoung got scouted.”

“Scouted? Good for her.”

KangYoon wasn’t that related to this. Only a few words were enough. However, one had to listen to the end.

“Oh, Oppa, keep listening. The place she was scouted from seems to be MG. MG Entertainment.”

“What? MG? Did the Liaison Team come all the way to Tongyeong? Wow, they’re busy.”

However, it still wasn’t that new for KangYoon. MG Entertainment was managing a special Liaison Team who traveled across the country looking for new talent. As Lee SamSoon was such a case, there was nothing new for KangYoon.

“Oppa, isn’t it amazing? Someone we knew got scouted, so amazing.”

“.....”

At HeeYoon’s words, KangYoon thought about the light that Park SoYoung showed him. Although it was an original composition, the light was very weak. He thought about whether she had some hidden talent or other elements, but he found it hard to think that it was to the point she would be scouted. However, a scout... KangYoon was confused.

‘Who is it?’

In the end, KangYoon stood up. He wanted to check which employee it was. Although it wasn’t his business, it was to ask him

what element he bought her so high in to see if it could help him or not.

“Oppa!! Wait for me!!”

HeeYoon followed KangYoon, who walked quickly even with flip-flops.

Park SoYoung’s house’s door was open. KangYoon excused himself and entered when he saw that two men in suits were talking with Park SoYoung and her parents.

“...What? 20 million won?!” ($\approx 17,400$ USD)

However, just as KangYoon came inside, a loud voice could be heard. KangYoon wondered what’s up and hurried inside.

Park SoYoung’s father’s expression was cringing while he was holding his head. He looked at the paperwork that the man in a suit gave him, and looked at it again to see if his eyes were deceiving him.

“The amount we’re providing for support is 30 million won ($\approx 26,000$ USD). It’s also an amount which would be earned back after 2 months of her debut.”

“Khm... Can I smoke for a bit?”

However, the paperwork wasn’t wrong. 20 million won. It was in no way, a small amount. The man in the suit said it was alright for him to slowly think it over and smiled.

In the end, after smoking an entire cigarette did Park SoYoung’s father speak with difficulty.

“...Very well. Let’s do this contract.”

“You’ve made a good decision. We will make miss Park SoYoung a great...”

While looking at the conversation involving money, KangYoon held out his phone towards HeeYoon.

“Call the police.”

“Eh? Why?”

“Say that there’s a thief, and tell them to quickly via location tracking. Say that something might happen.”

HeeYoon didn’t ask why. There was definitely a reason if KangYoon was saying this. She accepted and left straight away.

“Wait.”

Just as when Park SoYoung’s father was about to sign, KangYoon stepped in.

“Hey, you guys. Are you really from MG Entertainment?”

When KangYoon suddenly intruded, both Park SoYoung’s parents and the two men in suits couldn’t hide their confusion. Park SoYoung also thought ‘what’s this guy doing?’ and made an absurd expression. Especially Park SoYoung was looking at KangYoon as if she was treating KangYoon as a stranger as though she completely believed in the two men.

“Of course we are. Excuse me, I apologize but this is an important conversation so if you have anything to say please leave it for...”

“Is that so?”

KangYoon smirked. This wasn’t the leisurely ‘smile’ that he always showed to others. Whether they knew it or not, the two men in suits ignored him and turned their gazes to Park SoYoung’s parents. Park SoYoung also stood up and headed towards KangYoon. She was planning to send him outside.

“Then who are you and from which department?”

“Sorry?”

“If you came from MG, shouldn’t you have a department?”

‘What the hell is he?’ – the two men were looking at KangYoon with such expressions and Park SoYoung came to him instead of

them.

“HeeYoon’s brother, I’m sorry, but they’re my guests. Although you’re one too, but I don’t think this is right.”

“Wait.”

However, KangYoon instead stopped Park SoYoung, although he wouldn’t normally step in, this was different. While KangYoon was making a fuss with Park SoYoung, one of the men in suits approached him and presented him his business card.

“So you’re Chief Oh ChiSung of the Liaison Team.”

“Yes. Is your misunderstanding solved now?”

The men in suits made leisurely smiles as ever. Park SoYoung’s parents were also looking at how the situation was unfolding with Kangyoon and the two men in suits.

“Oooh. It’s Chief Oh ChiSung. Sorry for that.”

“That can happen. I’m sorry but this is an important contract so can we talk later...”

“Fuu, Chief Oh ChiSung, then do you know who I am?”

While watching the incomprehensible situation unfolding between KangYoon and the two men, Park SoYoung, and her parents gulped.

Chapter 47: Ties Bring With It A Fraud (3)

There was no way the men in suits would recognize KangYoon. No, they thought that they didn't even need to. Of course, their attitudes were polite. Since in front of them were their 'customers'.

"I don't know who you are and where you work, but let's talk later. I do understand that you're from the same industry but... the work with miss SoYoung is important."

The man in the suit was smoothly passing it over his even while feeling that something was wrong.

Of course, KangYoon realized the moment he saw the business card.

'A scammer.'

The business card was very well made. At a glance, the logo, the company telephone, and even the position looked very well to the point that anyone would be fooled. However, there was no way that KangYoon wouldn't know the business cards that the Liaison Team carried with them. Moreover, this man called Oh ChiSung said he didn't know KangYoon. Someone who doesn't know KangYoon within the company? Was there a person who didn't know the Planning Team Leader in MG Entertainment? There was no way he wouldn't be suspicious.

When the man in the suit saw that KangYoon would interfere even despite that, he gave out a threat.

"I don't know who you are, but I'm making a contract which would decide miss Park SoYoung's future. It's difficult for me if you keep interfering like this."

KangYoon burst out laughing since a scammer was being like that in front of the real deal. Any more politeness would be impossible.

"Yeah, you would be, since you can't do a scam. How dare you

steal the tears of a pure student?”

“..... President, it’s difficult for us if you keep doing that. What do you mean a scam to a person who came for a contract? Just how is it a scam?”

The man in the suit got angry. He was getting tired of KangYoon interfering, and couldn’t endure anymore. The expressions of the two men in suits turned fierce, but KangYoon didn’t lose out at all. No, he was even firmer.

“Excuse me, customer, if you keep interfering like this...”

When Park SoYoung’s father saw that the situation wasn’t going in a good direction, he tried to stop KangYoon. Then, KangYoon quietly took something out of his pocket and handed it to Park SoYoung. Park SoYoung received it thinking ‘what is this?’ and her eyes widened.

“MG Entertainment Planning and Management Team... Leader.... Lee KangYoon?! EEEEEEEEEKKKKKKKKKKKK?!”

This was completely different to the business card she received yesterday. Just the materials differed to the men in suits’ business card. Moreover, KangYoon took something else out and gave it to Park SoYoung. It was the employee card used for entering and exiting the company building. KangYoon’s face was right in the middle of it, and as it said ‘Planning and Management Team Leader’, she couldn’t not believe it.

“One of the most important principles, when MG Entertainment scouts for talent outside, is to ‘never request money from the trainees’. However, to say you want 20 million won since you would invest 30 million... What the fuck are you doing?”

The two men in suits looked at each other. They never knew that a real MG person would be here. Moreover, this guy wasn’t some manager on the scene, but the real thing! The two’s leisurely attitude disappeared.

“You fuckers!! Then you didn’t plan to make my dear SoYoung a star, but for money...?!”

“Hiiiiik!!”

After realizing the situation, Park SoYoung’s father picked up the bat on his side and started swinging it violently. At his threat, the two men hurriedly started running towards the door. KangYoon lightly tackled their legs as they were running past him. With a loud crash, the two men fell down, but they stood up instantly and ran away without even wearing their shoes.

“You fuckers...!!”

Park SoYoung’s father didn’t even look back and chased after them, but they were fast. In the end, he lost them.

“Dammit, Spit!! Fuckers!!”

He violently spat on the ground. He felt like his anger had died down a little along with the spit. He finally saw KangYoon who stopped the accident.

“Customer, thank you. No, did you say you were a Team Leader? Thank you very much. Thank you.”

He held KangYoon’s hand and didn’t let go. It was KangYoon who was instead, embarrassed.

“Not at all. Those bastards should be driven away from this industry. It’s good that nothing bad happened.”

“Oooh, not at all. To think that I received such grace... I’ll forego your fees for your lodging. No, I will treat you grandly. SoYoung!! Get some beef from the fridge!!”

“You don’t have to do that...”

KangYoon said alright, but Park SoYoung’s father was very passionate. Thanks to that, KangYoon and HeeYoon could taste the passionate personalities of those living in Tongyeong.

“Uncleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!”

As always, JooAh slammed the door to the Chairman’s office open and entered with a strong presence.

“You’re as ever.”

“Hello.”

Chairman Won JinMoon was in the middle of talking with Min JinSeo. Min JinSeo stood up and politely greeted JooAh, who she hadn’t seen for a while.

“You, JinSeo!! Wow, I heard you made your debut. You really seem different.”

“Not as good as you.”

“Don’t be so humble. JinSeo is here... does that mean it’s you in charge of her?”

When JooAh’s stunned gaze headed towards Chairman Won JinMoon, he nodded his head. Then, JooAh spoke with shocked eyes.

“Amazing. Chairman doesn’t take anyone. JinSeo, you’ve grown up!!”

“Not at all.”

“What do you mean ‘not at all’!!? I heard a little, but wasn’t the drama a big hit? It had over 30% of viewer ratings. I heard you were hot nowadays?”

“What do you mean ‘hot’?”

“What, It’s the truth.”

Completely different to the humble Min JinSeo, JooAh was very boastful about her popularity. They were two different people.

“JooAh, what are you doing in Korea? You are supposed to be recording with the Japanese producer this time. I heard the recording was there too?”

“We finished the recording... but I have a bad feeling about it.”

JooAh started speaking what she was thinking about to Chairman Won JinMoon.

“We finished recording and even finished preparing, but something’s weighing on my mind. I just need to release the album, but I don’t like it the more I listen to it. So, in the end, I fought with the PD and came here.”

“So that’s why there was a call yesterday.”

“They told you already? Japanese are so narrow-minded. Anyway!! Where’s KangYoon-oppa?”

The main point was this. Lee KangYoon!!

The aim JooAh had for coming to Korea was him.

“Team Leader Lee? He’s on a vacation, why?”

“I knew it!! His phone was turned off too!! I’m planning to ask KangYoon-oppa. If I can release this or not.”

“Hey... the planner on that side won’t like that.”

“What’s wrong with that? It’s his fault for not making me trust him.”

Chairman Won JinMoon heaved a deep sigh. After JooAh worked with KangYoon, she compared most planners with KangYoon. This wasn’t a good phenomenon. It was definite that the Japanese side wouldn’t like this.

“Excuse me... Seonbae-nim. Then you came here to work with sir?”

“Sir? Oh, you mean KangYoon-oppa?”

“Oppa?”

Min JinSeo’s voice became strange. Whether she knew it or not, JooAh kept speaking.

“Of course, or else, how would I have come here despite my busy

schedule? Uncle, when does KangYoon-oppa's vacation end?"

"... Tomorrow."

"Tch, I should wait then."

While looking at the grumbling JooAh, Min JinSeo's lips strangely curved upwards.

'Uuu... I think my stomach is still full...'

At the night beef party, KangYoon's stomach was swollen. However, as the beef that Park SoYoung's father grilled was very delicious, he overate and overate...

Even in the morning, his stomach was full.

"Uuuuu..."

"You're up?"

"Uuuuu..."

HeeYoon headed towards the toilet with her hair crumpled. As she didn't come out for a long time, it was clear that she was 'suffering' in there.

Kangyoon went outside. However, Park SoYoung was waiting for him outside.

"Did you have a nice sleep?"

"Hello, sleep well?"

"Yes. I... was waiting."

"For me?"

Did she have something to say? KangYoon sat on a rock while questioning.

"Thank you for stopping us yesterday. I think I was a bit off that time."

"I received full appreciation from your father."

KangYoon tapped his stomach. Park SoYoung laughed when she heard that.

“I was scared of you even though you were HeeYoon’s brother. But you’re interesting.”

“Really? Some other kids say that too.”

“Really? Well, you’re the Planning Team Leader so that’s reasonable. Oppa’s position, you have to make singers’ albums and such, right?”

“Correct.”

“Wow... I’ve met an amazing person.”

It wasn’t easy for Park SoYoung to meet someone like KangYoon. She didn’t want to miss this opportunity. KangYoon started walking on the beach and she followed.

“I wanted to ask yesterday but couldn’t. How was my song?”

“Song? Oh, you mean when you played the guitar?”

“.....”

She seemed to be embarrassed and couldn’t speak anymore. To request another person for evaluation was something difficult. Was it easy to be devastated by another person?

“Hmm... You were good.”

“I want you to be honest. I’m also an aspirant of this path.”

“.....”

KangYoon thought for a moment. Should he evaluate or not? Should he bury it under some praises or not – various thoughts flashed by in his mind.

‘She’s HeeYoon’s friend.’

And resolved.

“You were a composer aspirant, right?”

“Yes.”

“Your original composition needs some polishing. I feel that the intro had a weak impact. It feels like just running water.”

KangYoon thought back to the musical notes he saw that day. The brightness of the notes was neither strong or weak. If it was strong, then it would have been bright; and should have given a positive effect on the light.

“Also, the guitar and the voice, it felt like these two didn’t mix well. A bit like the melody and the chord don’t match, I think? It felt a bit off. If you match those, then I think a good song may be created.”

“Ahh...”

“Although I might not be a big help since I’m not that related to composing, I wish it could help you.”

Park SoYoung opened a memo on her phone and recorded KangYoon’s words. She didn’t want to miss out a single word and asked again and again to repeat. Even KangYoon was surprised.

After writing all of KangYoon’s words down, Park SoYoung started walking again.

“Thank you. If I become well, Team Leader... Oh, can I call you that?”

“You’re HeeYoon’s friend so just call me oppa.”

“Yes, oppa.”

Although there was a little desire behind that, Park SoYoung complied.

“If I do well, then I will repay you all back.”

“This isn’t much though.”

“I can go to MG Entertainment, right?”

“Ok, come. I will treat you.”

“No, I will become big and treat you.”

The two exchanged phone numbers. KangYoon liked the fact that Park SoYoung was HeeYoon’s friend, and to Park SoYoung, KangYoon was her savior. The two did have something in common.

Soon, they went to the beach and came back to the lodging. Now they needed to head home. They had to stop by the hospital for dialysis so KangYoon hurried up.

“Thank you!! Please come back again!!”

“See you later.”

KangYoon and HeeYoon left the lodging while receiving the farewells from Park SoYoung’s family.

They were heading towards a hospital in Tongyeong KangYoon looked up beforehand for the dialysis when HeeYoon checked her phone and spoke.

“Oppa, SoYoung says ‘let’s meet in Seoul next year’.”

“Good.”

This meant that she would go to a university in Seoul. KangYoon smiled, thinking that Park SoYoung’s resolve was very good.

After the vacation, KangYoon got through the hell train and went to work. The employees seemed to be curious when KangYoon came back after a while, as KangYoon was even more curious as to why they were greeting him with so much vigor.

When he went up to his office, his desk was clean.

‘So there isn’t any Concert Team work yet.’

After the Directors’ meeting last time, it seemed the Concert Team work wasn’t included in his work anymore. After the work with The ACE, there wasn’t any work with the Concert Team for 2 months so KangYoon thought it was weird. However, as he had no

work, he was also happy.

As soon as his work time came, the trainers brought him the reports. They were the reports on the girl group project.

‘They went on vacation, and now they’re back to practice. Now I should start on their conversation techniques and foreign languages.’

Although it wasn’t like that now, in 3 to 4 years, China would become a huge market. KangYoon prepared for that and made them learn Chinese as compulsory. Of course, the girls were screaming saying that the four tones or whatever were extremely difficult.

When he checked over all of the, it was over 11 o’clock. He craved for coffee and was about to stand up when the door slammed open.

“KangYoon-oppa!!”

With that, an amazing personnel intruded. It was JooAh with a lively smile. KangYoon was stunned and dropped the paper cup on the floor.

“Hey!! I was frightened.”

“Hehe. I’m here. You’re delighted, right? Right?”

“Not at all.”

“.....What the hell?”

At KangYoon’s not so big reaction, JooAh seemed disappointed as she cringed. At her honest reaction, KangYoon just smiled.

“So knock next time, knock.”

“Oh, whatever. I understand.”

To JooAh, who didn’t like instant coffee, KangYoon gave her green tea. JooAh grumbled saying she only drank green tea from tea leaves, but there was no way it would work on KangYoon.

“Drink what you get.”

“Why is the customer service like this here.”

“If you don’t want it, then leave.”

“Reflect.”

However, JooAh was strong. She lightly passed over KangYoon’s urging and even attacked back. She was a strong enemy amongst strong enemies.

After a childish prank, JooAh started talking about the main reason she came here today.

“I will release a mini album in Japan this time, but I’m a bit unsettled.”

“Then talk to the planner on that side.”

“But I can’t seem to get through to that planner. I find the song strange no matter how I listen to it, but that guy says it’s alright. I’m not assured about this, so to ask you, I came here with that song.”

“Is that person from a cooperating company?”

“He is. He’s called ‘Akabashi Tao’ and this guy’s so self-asserting and doesn’t listen to my opinion. Although his works were good in the past, nowadays they’re just so-so... I don’t know if his senses dulled or something.”

JooAh insulted that planner for a long time. The grumbling kept on as she had a lot piled up in her heart. KangYoon didn’t cut her off and kept listening to her.

“...Ahhh. It’s annoying.”

“No wonder you find it so annoying. So, in the end, you find that planner unreliable, right?”

“Yeah, yeah. I sure get my words through to you, oppa.”

JooAh felt her heart at ease. Although it was a trivial conversation, she felt like the feeling she had when the Japan

project was taking place, was coming alive again. A feeling that something was there to support her, a good feeling that she would do well in whatever she does.

“I’ll take a look.”

“I knew it!!”

“However, even if there’s a problem, it’s a different problem to edit it. It’s rude to the producer on that side, and we have to ask the cooperating company too, and we might have to change the release schedule as well. Moreover, I’m not the person in charge of your album right now. You know that, right?”

“Okay, so listen to it first!!”

She didn’t seem to like complicated things, as she was very forceful. She looked exactly like a little sister who asked her brother to do everything for her. And here, she was so picky the first time he worked with her, and now, she was basically saying ‘you’re the only one’. KangYoon only smiled.

“Okay, let’s go.”

“Yay!!”

When KangYoon agreed and stood up, JooAh also became delighted and followed him out.

Like that, the two headed towards the underground studio.

Chapter 48: Making It Work (1)

After loading the setting named ‘JooAh’ onto the digital mixer, KangYoon made JooAh enter the booth.

-Shall we start immediately?

“Is your throat alright?”

-I’m all warmed up. I’m at my best right now.

JooAh’s voice was all tensed up as though she was itching to start. When KangYoon saw that she was overflowing with energy, he quickly finished the detailed settings and played the recording.

When JooAh’s song started flowing out with the melody, a white note flowed out to make white light.

‘It’s not bad... What’s wrong with it?’

KangYoon was confused. The song he was listening to right now was the song she said was a bit off.

He thought that the light but rhythmical title song was suitable for the latest trend, and the color of the musical notes was constant so it was very suitable.

However, the problem started on the chorus of the 2nd verse.

-繰り返して — (Sourihenshite = Repeat)

‘Huh?’

This was a part where the chord became higher to heighten the atmosphere along with the change in the lyrics. However, the yellow musical note that came out was slightly off.

When that note was added to the light, the white light became a little dimmer. It was a small change.

‘So this is why she said it was strange.’

KangYoon focused more. Music was originally very delicate. That delicateness may become the reason to be rejected by the populace.

KangYoon concentrated on JooAh's singing, fearing that he may miss a single thing out.

A minute later.

JooAh finished singing the title song 'Bluebird's Song' and exited the booth. She still didn't seem to like this song as she asked KangYoon with a face full of complaint.

"How was the song?"

"Slightly strange, I guess?"

"Slightly strange? Where?"

JooAh wanted him to say 'I don't like it either', but KangYoon's answer was a bit different to what she wanted.

JooAh's eyes cringed a little. Whether he knew that or not, KangYoon sat down in front of the big studio mixer and started saying his thoughts.

"It's a good song. But when the tone changes in the 2nd verse, that bit is slightly strange."

"Was it like that in your ears? Then should I ask him to leave that part out?"

"Then the song doesn't come alive. I think the highlight of it is the complete change in the atmosphere. Hmm...."

He didn't feel that JooAh's song was lacking. In KangYoon's ears, JooAh's singing skills had no flaw.

However, it was a little mismatching with this title song. The time when the tone changes and when it gradually rose – the feeling didn't come alive and the dimming light was proof of that.

'The people's expectations become higher as the tone becomes higher, if it's like this, they will only be disappointed. Is the problem in the melody? Or what is the problem?'

Although he knew the feeling, as he didn't know practical music

theory, KangYoon also agonized. He wanted to give the right advice at moment like these.

KangYoon felt the dire need of music theory.

While KangYoon was thinking such things, JooAh dragged a chair and approached KangYoon.

“So, you will do this for me, right, oppa?”

“No.”

“Ah, why!!”

At KangYoon’s firm rejection, JooAh became angry in frustration. As KangYoon knew that she was trying to drag him in, he was very firm.

“It’s not my work.”

“Ah, really!! Were we so distant to the point that we bounced each other back?”

“Work is work. It’s not even a work assigned to me. I don’t have a reason to do it. Why are you being so childish?”

“Ah, I don’t know anything!! Just help me, please?”

JooAh was very forward. Although nothing wouldn’t work with her being stubborn when inside the company, to KangYoon it only happened across the river.

“I said to you last time. Your planner is in Japan. If you want my help, then you must officially ask for permission from that person. Just this was very rude as well. Also, I have my own work as well.”

“I will take care of that. I’m the boss around here.”

“You were a delinquent?”

“Delinquent or whatever. I just need you, okay?”

“.....”

KangYoon had nothing to say to JooAh, who was even asking

him while holding his hand with both her hands. However, no was no. He had to start with the work with the Concert Team, now that the work with The ACE was finished, and he slowly had to start working on the girl group's debut as well.

He couldn't be held up by JooAh all the time.

At that moment, when JooAh was holding KangYoon's hand, the door quietly opened. However, the person was completely unrelated to the studio.

"JooAh-unni?"

"JinSeo."

JooAh didn't seem to be embarrassed at all even with Min JinSeo in front of her as she didn't let go of KangYoon's hand. However, such a scene was completely differently taken by Min JinSeo.

"...It was just the two of you here?"

"Oooh. It was to listen to the song. What are you doing here, JinSeo?"

"...Hello, sir."

Min JinSeo's eyes seemed a little strange. She ignored JooAh and turned her gaze towards KangYoon straight away. KangYoon lightly shook JooAh's hands off and greeted Min JinSeo.

"JinSeo, how were you doing?"

"I was doing well. Although I'm a little busy, I'm still fine."

"It's good that you're doing well. Do you have any business here?"

"It's just..."

At KangYoon's question, Min JinSeo only vaguely muttered. When she did, JooAh's eyes flashed strangely.

'Look at that... giggle.'

Seeing Min JinSeo so helpless in front of KangYoon, the quick-

witted JooAh noticed Min JinSeo's feelings right away. Just from a glance, she could tell that she was a girl in love.

When an interesting spectacle appeared, she could even forgive KangYoon ignoring her. No, she was about to burst in laughter.

“Oppa, I will go rest a bit.”

“Let's end it here.”

“No, never. Stay here.”

“I'm going to my office.”

“No, just one hour, please?”

JooAh asked KangYoon again and again and acquired a little bit of time. Then she left the studio with Min JinSeo with arms around each other's shoulders.

“When were they so close to each other?”

KangYoon was slightly worried that the picky JooAh may bully the kind Min JinSeo. However, he soon started controlling the machine and listened to JooAh's recorded song.

“JinSeo, do you like KangYoon-oppa?”

“.....”

In the empty rest area, JooAh giggled. Min JinSeo widened her eyes as she was shocked by her words.

JooAh was only trying to lightly poke her, but her expression became strange after she saw Min JinSeo's reaction.

“Huh? This girl, for real?”

“.....”

“Stopp there. Sto, well, KangYoon-oppa is cool alright. He's tall, has long

legs, has wide shoulders, has the skills... oh, just the age is a problem.”

“...Something like that doesn’t matter.”

Now that she was found out, anything went. Min JinSeo was angry that JooAh was taking lightly of her feelings, so she looked at her with a serious expression.

“Hey, don’t be so scary. I’m you senior here, you know?”

“.....”

However, Min JinSeo didn’t back down at all. The effect of being found out was very big. When a light joke came back heavily, JooAh also seemed to find it absurd as she snorted and looked back at her.

“You, are quite cocky, aren’t ya?”

“.....”

Min JinSeo didn’t back down even though the person she was facing was a big seonbae of hers. Her eyes instead tensed.

The two had a staring competition for a moment. Then...

“HAHAHAHA!!”

Suddenly, JooAh burst out laughing. While Min JinSeo tilted her head as she didn’t understand, JooAh walked a big step towards her.

“Yeah, yeah. If you want to become the top, then you must have at least that amount of personality. I thought you were a pushover girl. Good, good. KangYoon-oppa’s eyes are quite scary too. He didn’t just choose a pushover girl. I never knew there would be anyone in this company who would come at me up front.”

“.....”

“Well, I’m sorry if I was rude. It was just lightly provoking you but I didn’t know it was for real. Well, it’s just youth.”

.....JooAh and Min JinSeo are 3 years apart.

“...I’m not playing around.”

“Ok ok. I get it. I get it already. I understand you. I will keep this to myself so don’t worry about it. Even so, be careful. This area is where a lot of rumors go to and forth. You know that, right?”

“Yes. Thank you for the advice.”

What would happen if a rising star had a scandalous element? That would become a big bomb.

JooAh also didn’t want that. Of course, they could wrap it up as admiration but media was where small things became puffed up and were the voice of the populace.

“This unni will go back to recording. Also, don’t worry. I will only like someone much better than KangYoon-oppa.”

“.....”

“Time will solve everything.”

JooAh said her point then left the resting area.

“You’re right. Time... will solve everything.”

Looking at JooAh’s back, Min JinSeo quietly muttered.

Today his work was a personal interview with Christie An.

Before practice, KangYoon called Christie An to his office.

After bringing out a cup of coffee for her, KangYoon started the interview while looking at the papers that the trainers gave him.

“Your dance is becoming better.”

“.....”

“Your singing too....”

“.....”

“Is there any other problem?”

“...None.”

Christie An was very stiff. No, she only spoke what was

necessary. KangYoon found it difficult to have an interview with this uninteresting girl.

Along with Ailee Jung, who was always depressed whenever she came up, she was one of the top two who he had difficulties in having an interview with.

“Are you getting along well with HanYu?”

“Yes.”

“Well, HanYu isn’t picky.”

“If you exclude that she cleans up too often, then it’s alright.”

Today’s interview was no different from usual. As there was nothing to notify them, KangYoon only checked the necessary things and ended the interview.

“Then may I leave?”

“You may.”

“Then...”

Just as when Christie An was about to stand up after the interview, the shut door slammed open. It was JooAh.

“You, I said to knock you...”

“Oppa!! That’s not the problem right now!!”

However, JooAh cut off his words and spoke her point.

“What is it?”

“I was given permission, the permission!!”

“What permission?”

“The song!! You said the title song was strange last time. That one!!”

“Oh, really?”

KangYoon looked very uninterested. She originally said that 2 songs were strange, but he had only listened to the title song and

didn't even listen to the others. He had just lightly listened to it, but JooAh was all over the place with it.

“Yes. It's good. Now you need to come too, oppa.”

“Why me?”

“The composer will come later. You said that I needed to ask for permission from the producer on the Japanese side and the composer as well, right? I did all of them~.”

KangYoon was honestly stunned. What was this? KangYoon was in disbelief so he called Chairman Won JinMoon who was in charge of JooAh.

-JooAh is right. I'm sorry, but please take care of her.

“Chairman. How could you do this?”

-...I'm sorry, but I will make it up to you with money this time.

“.....”

KangYoon had nothing to say. Money – he couldn't say anything now that Chairman Won JinMoon said that he would give him a bonus.

In other words, this also meant that this work would be evaluated for the special bonus, and he had to take up this work officially.

“Fufu, please take care of me.”

“.....”

KangYoon lost his words at JooAh who was dragging him in.

“Sigh...”

Even Christie An, who watched the situation, opened her mouth wide in shock after seeing JooAh's aggressiveness.

President Lee HyunJi was annoyed from the bottom of her heart. KangYoon was necessary for the Concert Team to start its work,

but JooAh had fished him away.

So she went to the Chairman's office in anger.

“Sigh... I'm sorry.”

However, Chairman Won JinMoon started off by apologizing. As Chairman Won JinMoon rarely apologized, President Lee HyunJi was very confused about this.

“Don't you know that JooAh's mini album, this time, is very important? So, we left it to a well-known Japanese planner, but he couldn't earn JooAh's trust so... This isn't good.”

“Even so, how can you take Team Leader Lee away? We already have stopped the Concert Team's work for 3 months and now the achievements we piled up are about to become useless.”

“Even so, shouldn't we protect the immediate cash cow? Please take a step back this time. It won't take long.”

“...Chairman.”

Now that Chairman Won JinMoon was firm in his decisions, President Lee HyunJi couldn't say anything. With his words, the work with the Concert Team ended up being delayed.

She couldn't even show him the documents she brought and had to leave the Chairman's office.

‘If we keep doing this, this will be taken by another company. This is a huge work so the competition won't be small...’

In her hands was a document titled ‘Lee MinSoo's 25-year anniversary concert’.

In fact, KangYoon didn't like being dragged around like this. Although he knew that it was inevitable as an employee, he denied being pushed around here and there.

“JooAh.”

“What is it?”

She seemed to be delighted to work with KangYoon again. However, KangYoon's words were bitter to JooAh.

"I will overlook it this time, but don't do this next time."

".....Tch, so expensive eh. Okay, I'm sorry."

JooAh pouted. There was no one within MG Entertainment who treated her like this. At most, it was just Chairman Won JinMoon.

However, another person was added to the mix. As she had a good synergy with KangYoon, she could only be obedient.

"Good, that's that. Let's go."

"Good, good. This is why I like you, oppa."

She seemed to have a good impression of KangYoon who was very clear cut, as she even locked arms with him and headed to the studio.

Inside the studio was a man with stuffy hair and the other employees, waiting for the two of them

"I... I Im Kita... Kitawa Shu... Shunji."

"You can speak Korean?"

This man was the composer. KangYoon was surprised at this man who introduced himself in poor Korean. He made a smile and spoke.

"I..im JooAh's fan."

"...You can speak in Japanese."

[You know how to speak Japanese?]

[If it's just simple communication. I'm Lee KangYoon.]

He seemed to be surprised at KangYoon as he looked at him with an honestly surprised expression. However, that was just for a brief time. He eventually looked towards JooAh and smiled.

[Shunji-san!!]

[JooAh-san!!]

The two seemed to have become close while working together as they even grabbed each other's hands.

As composer Kitawa Shunji was only biting his thumb while he was waiting with the employees, the employees were all stunned.

After a brief tea time with the introductions ended, they went into talking about the song.

[So, you mean you want to change the 2nd verse.]

[Yes. How should I say this... It feels a little off.]

[*Sob*...]

Composer Kitawa Shunji went into depression mode after getting hit by JooAh's direct shot. KangYoon softened the words down.

[It's not that we hate it. We just want you to change it. We want some change in the part where the chord changes, like adding instruments for example.]

[You don't... hate it?]

[...Yes.]

KangYoon inwardly laughed thinking – 'are all Japanese composers like this?'. He felt like he was confronting a little child.

At that moment, Composer Shunji controlled the 48 channel mixer, which KangYoon had difficulties controlling, and connected it to his laptop and finished the setting instantly.

While KangYoon was blinking in surprise, Composer Shunji smoothly spoke.

[Okay, let's do this.]

His childish side instantly disappeared and he transformed into a composer. The change was instant. Whether it was KangYoon, JooAh, or the employees, they only blinked their eyes several times, stunned.

‘Are the Japanese all eccentric like that?’

The both unknowingly thought together.

JooAh entered the booth, and the song started to see which part there was a problem with. At the same time the song started, KangYoon could see lights along with the musical notes.

‘I think the 1st verse is fine.’

There was no problem with the 1st verse as it had strong light. However, the problem was the 2nd verse. The chorus where the chord changes. The problem started.

‘It’s dimming.’

The shape of the musical note became strange and the light also dimmed. The white light dimmed and even gray color could be seen from time to time.

KangYoon thought this was no good and turned his gaze to Composer Shunji. The small eyes behind his thick glasses looked sharp.

The song ended, and JooAh came out of the booth.

[How was it?]

JooAh immediately asked.

[Is this strange?]

However, the composer said something completely different. JooAh panicked.

[In the 2nd verse where the key changes, the feeling changes too much. I feel the latter parts are getting ruined.]

[That’s strange. It sounds alright for me, though...]

[Eeh?]

JooAh thought it was absurd. She kept appealing her thoughts but Composer Shunji only tilted his head.

‘Well, the composer should have given the song since he thought it was 100% complete.’

KangYoon thought from the composer’s view. There was no way they would give out what they thought was unfinished. Seeing that JooAh and Composer Shunji were going at each other, KangYoon thought up of a solution.

‘First, let’s try everything.’

[First, let’s keep the original and edit on a copy. The feelings of the singer who sings it is important as well.]

[Right, right. JooAh’s feelings are especially important.]

[.....]

JooAh couldn’t understand this character called Shunji. However, she didn’t show it on the surface. This was a scene where pros worked.

[What number sound does this part have?]

[The sounds are...]

They decided to substitute each and every sound in the computer. They changed the accompaniment, changed the melody, and they even planned to start from scratch if even that didn’t work. There was no way they could give out a song with gray light.

After Composer Shunji finished the work, JooAh entered the booth again.

[Let’s start.]

With KangYoon’s words, the song started again with the edited version.

Chapter 49: Making It Work (2)

-繰り-返して — (Kurikaeshite = Repeat/Again)

While the accompaniment changed, and the effector changed, JooAh kept repeating the same phrase.

Although it was the same phrase, she tilted her head when she discovered that the feeling she had gradually changed.

-Oppa, my voice is echoing too much.

“Is there too much echo...”

KangYoon immediately requested Composer Shunji to change the effector. He seemed to have the same mind as KangYoon as Composer Shunji worked on the machine immediately.

After touching it, JooAh sung the same phrase again. However, JooAh still tapped on her microphone and expressed her complaint.

-It's strange. It's too sharp.

“What about the melody?”

-I'm not sure about the melody, but right now, I don't feel it's that good.

JooAh expressed her complaint, seemingly dissatisfied with the sounds. The continuous drain on her stamina due to the recording also played a role.

It was the same with KangYoon or Composer Shunji. However, no one expressed their fatigue until they became satisfied.

‘The light of the musical note slightly changes. It's getting affected by which sound effect is added.’

The sound effect right now was a mix of an organ and a piano. They weren't just recording. Composing, to be exact, arranging, was the word.

Composer Shunji wanted to give her a song that matched her, as he was a fan of her, and JooAh wanted a proper song.

The two's synergy was good, but KangYoon judged that the efficiency won't be good like this.

[This won't do. Let's rest for a bit.]

In the end, KangYoon declared rest. KangYoon signaled JooAh inside the booth to come out.

“Ah... So tired...”

JooAh laid on the sofa as soon as she came out. As her top was quite short, her thin waist was exposed.

Composer Shunji widened his eyes in shock, but KangYoon seemed to be used to it, as he just asked Composer Shunji what he wanted for dinner.

[Is there anything you want to eat?]

[Is it dinner time?]

[Do you like sushi? Or Korean food?]

[This is Korea so I should eat Korean food. What was it? Something similar to natto...]

Korean Doenjang Jjigae, Composer Shunji wanted this. KangYoon called for a delivery right away.

JooAh grumbled, saying why he didn't ask her, but KangYoon completely ignored her. It was a small revenge for getting him caught up in this.

Not long after that, doenjang jjigae, kimchi jjigae, and sundubu jjigae was delivered. It seemed the sundubu jjigae and the doenjang jjigae had no salt added to it, as there was salt on the side.

“I really should acknowledge your senses.”

JooAh praised KangYoon while putting a little salt into the sundubu jjigae, and Composer Shunji also started eating the

doenjang jjigae after putting some salt in.

He kept shouting ‘sugoi’, seemingly surprised at KangYoon’s consideration.

After the meal, KangYoon had some rest time. As he had a headache KangYoon headed to the rooftop. He craved for a smoke, which was rare.

“Recently, I seem to have started smoking a lot...”

KangYoon scattered the smoke into the air. He never smoked more than one per day. If he smoked two, then he would ruin the day due to a headache.

Even so, he didn’t know the reason why he had to smoke at least one a day. Maybe, he just liked to be absorbed in thinking while smoking.

‘Musical notes... musical notes, eh...’

KangYoon organized his thoughts. Today, most of the musical notes coming out from JooAh were very consistent. However, the light from the musical note was the problem.

They changed the sounds countless times and tried adding effects onto JooAh’s voice using the mixer, but they couldn’t stop the gray light after the musical notes combined.

‘Should we just throw away the key change?’

However, KangYoon shook his head. It was a good idea to change the mood. It was too good to throw this new approach away.

While he was thinking on the rooftop, he could feel a presence behind him. It was Christie An.

“Team Leader...”

“Huh? Weren’t you suppose to practice right now?”

“Today it ends early.”

Christie An replied with a short answer. Like when they had an

interview, Christie An was as stiff as always. Kangyoon finally remembered that today, there was no group practice, but private practice.

“Oh, that’s right. Today your private practices ended early.”

“Yes.”

“Well done. Then see you next time.”

KangYoon was about to leave the rooftop when Christie An grabbed him

“Team Leader.”

“Eh?”

For KangYoon, this was unexpected. This was the first time Christie An had called him first.

“Do you have anything to say?”

“It’s... I am curious about something.”

She seemed to hesitate before she said her business.

“Are you perhaps going to do JooAh-seonbae-nim’s album right now?”

“Yes.”

“If it doesn’t bother you... can I watch it?”

This was unexpected for KangYoon. Christie An had never requested something until now.

“May I ask you for the reason?”

“.....”

At KangYoon’s question, Christie An showed a completely different expression from until now. She twisted both her hands and even blushed.

“...I li... I like....”

“What was that?”

“I li... like... admire seonbae-nim.”

KangYoon thought this was absurd. Watching because of admiration? Hearing this reason, KangYoon was dumbfounded. Then, Christie An waved her hands in shock.

“I... it’s not like that. Joo... JooAh-seonbae-nim shows a good figure as a singer so... if... if... if I see her work... I ... I might learn something fr... from... her...”

The panicking Christie An was very interesting. Now that he thought about it, she tried to hide when JooAh abruptly came in last time when he was having an interview with her. In the end, KangYoon ended up chuckling.

“Chuckle.”

“.....”

When KangYoon started laughing, she drooped her head. As there was nothing bad about it, KangYoon allowed it.

“Okay. So you want to watch us working right? Since it might help you, right?”

“Yes, yes!!”

KangYoon gave her an excuse. The normally chic Christie An was all but gone. She had only become an obedient lamb.

“But we’re working right now. Will you be alright? That girl’s picky when working.”

“Yes, I’m alright!!”

“Let’s go, then. Did you have dinner?”

“I don’t need one.”

“That’s no good.”

KangYoon went to the rest area with Christie An and bought her a bread and drink. Christie An finished the food in less than 5 minutes and lightly urged KangYoon to go quickly. KangYoon

lightly smiled looking at the excited Christie An.

‘To think I’ll get to watch JooAh-seonbae-nim working!!’

JooAh was a target of admiration, envy, jealousy, and learning. Just thinking that she would watch such a person working, Christie An was excited. With such a mind, she widely opened the door to the studio.

However...

‘What’s this smell?’

The savory smell of food inside the studio welcomed Christie An. At the completely unexpected smell attack, she subconsciously blocked her nose.

“Oppa, what kind of smoke after a meal takes one hour?”

“It hasn’t even been 30 minutes...”

“Shut up. If I say it’s one hour, then it’s one hour.”

Because of a single smoke, KangYoon started fighting with JooAh. To Christie An, such a figure was shocking itself. The light makeup and the slightly tight training clothes made JooAh shiny, but the fact that she was fighting with KangYoon over a smoke looked a little... cheap.

“Your junior’s here. Stop doing that.”

“Where? Oh, you’re right.”

However, JooAh didn’t mind Christie An that much. Christie An bowed down 90 degrees even though JooAh pretended to not see her.

“Good evening, seonbae-nim.”

“Ah, yeah.”

JooAh lightly accepted her greeting. KangYoon shrugged his shoulders and prepared a seat next to the mixer, where the booth could be seen, for Christie An.

“Sit here. She’s sensitive during work so don’t interfere.”

“Yes.”

Christie An didn’t mind JooAh’s cold reactions. She knew that JooAh was originally cold towards her juniors. No, instead, her eyes shined even brighter.

‘So cool!!’

Instead, she was delighted saying that she was cool.

JooAh went inside the booth again, and the recording re-started. There were many sounds they hadn’t tried yet. While Composer Shunji was controlling the machine, JooAh’s song started reverberating across the studio.

‘The song’s good!!’

Christie An’s eyes shined. The normal, expressionless figure of her was all but gone. She was getting absorbed into JooAh singing with her headphones on.

-Oppa, how is it?

“I think it’s better than the previous one, but this is also no good.”

As he had to look for small changes in the musical notes, KangYoon also became sensitive. However, it couldn’t be helped. Composer Shunji also became exhausted with the continuous work, but he still kept up on the journey to make a good song.

In the end, they ran out of the effects they prepared.

[This is it. There are no more.]

[Whaat?]

Hearing the declaration that they had used up all the countless effects, KangYoon ended up sighing. JooAh also sat there inside the booth absent-mindedly.

‘In the end, does that mean this isn’t it?’

KangYoon pondered. Then where is the answer? If it isn't the sound effects, then it's...

‘The melody!!’

At that moment, a thought flashed in KangYoon's head. Although it was a very idiotic method, he could find the answer. However, the process was very painful.

[I'm sorry but can we change the melody?]

[It is. Like this, and this...]

Composer Shunji made KangYoon listen to a few digital pianos through the computer. JooAh's song's sounds had changed.

“Will this work?”

Too much time had passed. The persistent JooAh was also not looking good due to exhaustion. KangYoon grabbed her hand and pulled her up and patted her shoulders.

“Let's just do a little more. If it doesn't work... Ah fuck, then we'll start from scratch.”

“You said no last time.”

“There must be a problem if even after all this it doesn't work. I will try to make it happen.”

“Yes!!”

Of course, this was a white lie. However, JooAh earned energy from KangYoon's words and entered the booth. The changed sound effects along with the melody flowed out and JooAh also tapped the rhythm before starting to sing.

-繰り-返して — (Sourihenshite = Repeat)

“!!!!”

KangYoon exclaimed in delight looking at the consistent musical notes and the bright white light. Composer Shunji also lightly nodded after listening to the song. It was his style, albeit a little

feminine.

‘JooAh-unni’s so cool. Team Leader too...’

Christie An, who hadn’t left after all this time, also sent out gazes of admiration with her tired eyes.

[This is it.]

[Right?]

Composer Shunji seemed to agree with KangYoon’s words as he nodded.

[Then I’ll flesh out the song until the day after tomorrow and bring the song back.]

[Please.]

[The time right now is... whoa.]

Composer Shunji looked at the clock and exclaimed. It was already going past 4 o’clock in the morning. They didn’t even look at the time due to focusing so much.

JooAh also exclaimed as if being refreshed while coming out of the booth.

“Ah, the end the end the end!! THE EEEEEENNNNNDD!! Thanks for your hard work!!”

As if shaking off all the hard progress, JooAh bowed down towards KangYoon and Composer Shunji.

“Well done.”

“Oppa, thanks so much. As payment, I’ll forget the fact that you went to those girls last time.”

“...What are you saying.”

When JooAh looked at her grudgingly, Christie An was scared out of her wits. She thought whether they were really that important. However, whether KangYoon knew that or not, he just kept speaking.

“Look at you speaking about those kids. Today it’s a late night so go rest.”

“Yeah, yeah. Thank you for your work. Thank you for your work too, composer.”

“Thank yu fur de work.”

Anyway, the work ended safely.

“Christie.”

“.....”

“Christie.”

“.....”

“Hey!! Christie!!”

“...*slurp*...”

When she opened her eyes, her English teacher was in front of her. Besides her, Jung MinAh was giggling.

“No matter how you’re a trainee, I said no to sleeping at school. I’d rather you do something else. Go stand in the corridor!!”

“...Yes.”

Christie An was driven out to the corridor after she was hit by the English teacher’s scary gaze.

‘You [can’t even have a conversation in English...](#)’

(T/N: Yes. Most Korean English teacher cannot have a conversation in English. They only know grammar. They probably know more grammar than English students.)(E/N: then why are Koreans so bad when it comes to English tense)

Although she was chased out due to dozing off, her lips were pouting. Insulting the teacher was a bonus. In fact, there was also the reason that it was useless to listen to the class. With an absent-minded gaze, she thought back to yesterday.

‘JooAh-seonbae-nim was so cool. She sang the same song so many times while saying the feeling was wrong. Until she was satisfied...’

Her eyes glistened thinking about the figure of a musician. She wasn’t at all sleepy yesterday. Of course, the person in question, JooAh felt like dying, but as she had a halo in Christie An’s eyes, there was no way she would look like that.

‘I also want to be like that.’

Others would listen to the song she recorded, under the brightly lit stage where dry ice would be scattered and receiving the cheers of the people... Just thinking about it made her shiver.

“Aaah... So good.”

“Are you thinking about your boyfriend or something?”

However, suddenly, the door opened and she could hear a familiar voice.

“What, it’s you?”

“Yes, it’s me.”

It was her colleague and friend at school, Jung MinAh. She also seemed to have dozed off as her forehead was red.

“You dozed off?”

“How can you listen to such a boring class?”

“True, true.”

When Christie An asked while looking at the mark on her forehead, Jung MinAh nonchalantly replied. Christie An agreed right away. The English teacher’s class was known for being a sleeping drug.

“So you were at where JooAh-seonbae was recording?”

“Yeah. They worked until 4 in the morning. They said it wasn’t a recording but editing. But well, I don’t know what’s what.”

“You should have taken me if there was such a good thing. Only you got to watch something good.”

Jung MinAh cringed as if disappointed. However, Christie An nonchalantly replied, seemingly not interested.

“Good things are only interesting when watching alone.”

“You only learned the bad stuff. Don’t use my stomach as a pillow from now.”

“Did I ever ask you for permission?”

“Oho?”

While the two’s voice was starting to get louder, a scary voice erupted from the classroom.

“You girls!! You’re even chatting in the corridor?!”

“.....”

At the scary shout, the two became quiet and eventually started whispering.

‘It’s because of you!!’

‘What are you saying. It’s because your voice was loud’

Jung MinAh and Christie An’s verbal fight continued until the class ended.

Although the promise was that he would bring the finished song 3 days after their work, Composer Shunji came to MG Entertainment with the finished song the next night.

Thanks to that, whether it was KangYoon, who was about to leave, and JooAh, who was at the dorms, had to hurry to the company.

[Should I have come tomorrow?]

[Not at all. It’s good to do it early.]

While setting up in the studio. KangYoon waved his hands saying it was alright.

When JooAh arrived, the three had a listen to the song.

“The melody is good. Although, I have to sing to be sure.”

“Let’s do it right now.”

JooAh entered the booth right away and put on the headset. As her hair became a mess after taking off the beanie, she didn’t mind at all. When the song started, musical notes started flowing out and the light started shining.

‘It became better.’

It was clearly different to the previous version. KangYoon was satisfied with the positive change to whether it was the musical note or the light.

[It goes well with JooAh.]

[I think the same.]

Composer Shunji also seemed to be satisfied as he was all smiles.

‘From now is the problem.’

KangYoon was tense. The 1st verse ended, and the part where it changed in the 2nd verse was approaching. He gulped nervously thinking if the song would get better or if there would be any unexpected changes.

-繰り- 返して ——

JooAh’s singing reverberated throughout the studio, and the light coming out from her rippled. The increase in key changed smoothly and the light became even brighter. The light made by the musical notes got stronger and even affected Christie An.

“So cool...”

Christie An was dumbfounded and her mouth was wide open. She didn’t express any of her opinions normally, much less any

exclamations. Looking at the strong light and the clear reaction, KangYoon could be sure that the song had become better.

[Thanks for your work. I like it.]

[Thank you for your work. It's the power of a fan.]

While JooAh's singing was resounding across the studio, KangYoon firmly grasped Composer Shunji's hand.

"Oppa. This song is amazing."

Composer Shunji went back, and JooAh was lying down on the luxurious sofa in the studio with her thumb held high.

"So you feel safe now?"

"It should have been like this from the beginning. Ah, really. That crazy guy keeps urging me to do that strange song..."

"I don't think the composer is that hard-minded though?"

"Not the composer. I'm thinking about the planner PD. I can't get through to him, unlike with you, and he keeps saying he's right and he wants me to listen to him. You know what? He said that everything would work out if I followed his words since I'm Korean and don't know Japan as well as him."

JooAh seemed angry just by thinking it as she kept insulting the Japanese planner all the time. She seemed to have a lot piled up as even her hands were trembling. KangYoon only silently listened. Since he wouldn't know until he met the person in question.

"Now we just have to persuade him."

"You will do this for me too, right, oppa?"

"No."

KangYoon firmly shook his head. JooAh obviously got angry.

"Ah, why again!!"

"My work ends here. It's good that I worked with your song."

Why again.”

“Oppa!!”

JooAh kept clinging to KangYoon, but he didn’t flinch.

“I need to do my work. Although you’re important as well, JooAh, when would I do my work if I keep working with you?”

“Uk...”

“I did this much so you take a step back too. The song came out properly so you can do the persuasion yourself, right?”

JooAh had nothing to say. KangYoon’s words were right. In fact, she even felt sorry for clinging to him so much.

“Okay, but you sound quite distant?”

“Hey, I did enough. What do you mean distant?”

“... Really, I really can’t say anything to you. Why are you coming out so strong?”

“Try raising a little sister. You would become like this too.”

“Tch. I got it. Hey, you there.”

JooAh understood instantly when she thought about KangYoon’s sister, HeeYoon. There was a reason why KangYoon was like that.

Now, JooAh’s arrow pointed towards Christie An.

“Yes, yes!!”

“Listen to Team Leader well. Tell these words to the kids around you too.”

“Yes!!”

JooAh seemed to be satisfied with the tense Christie An as she smiled and nodded. KangYoon awkwardly laughed at that.

“You’re trying to discipline them in front of me?”

“Heh, tell me if the kids don’t listen to you. They don’t listen to a person who even forgoes my work? I’ll just...”

“Hey hey.”

“Hahaha, then see you later.”

JooAh hurriedly left the studio, fearing KangYoon’s scolding. KangYoon laughed seeing that JooAh’s personality was the same as ever.

“Really. Such a funny girl. Christie, let’s go.”

“.....”

“Christie?”

“.....Yes. Le... let’s go.”

Christie An looked as she was about to cry and only came to her senses after hearing KangYoon’s words.

‘Why me...’

She was hated by JooAh just because she couldn’t work with KangYoon because of them... Christie An was frustrated. One one side, she became confident thinking that they were that good, but she trembled thinking that she was hated by JooAh.

Whether he knew or not, KangYoon only shrugged his shoulders.

In the President’s office. KangYoon was talking with President Lee HyunJi about the concert team.

“This, it’s impossible to fit the schedule.”

KangYoon shook his head after he had a look at the papers which had the title ‘Lee MinSoo 25 year anniversary concert’.

“Is it impossible?”

“Yes. Not to mention now, I would have had to start with this at least 2 weeks ago. This is not a scale where we could do this by ourselves. We’d have to work with various companies if it’s a 10,000 people-scale concert, so we’d have to select the companies, secure the budget... There will be a lot of variables. In the end,

even if we do this by forcing it, there won't be any profit."

"That's a pity... Is there not even a 1% chance?"

Lee MinSoo's 25-year anniversary concert.

President Lee HyunJi seemed to find a pity that such a large scale project would be thrown away as she kept trying to persuade KangYoon. However, KangYoon was firm.

"Yes. I think it's impossible. Now that we have become the late comers, we'd have to reduce the prices. If we do that, then there will be bad rumors about us amongst other companies. There will be no profit, and if we even get ourselves a bad reputation, then it would become difficult to set the concert team properly. I don't see the need to force it due to the small amount of profit."

"Ah... that's a headache. I needed to persuade the Chairman no matter what at that time..."

President Lee HyunJi regretted that she couldn't persuade Chairman Won JinMoon when KangYoon was taken by JooAh. She found it such a pity that they lost such a large scale project.

However, KangYoon's thoughts were different.

"The Chairman may have thought that the time wasn't right. Currently, I'm also in charge of the girl group project. A concert isn't a project I can do in a short time. I need to work for several months on just that, and the Chairman may have judged that it would be difficult to do side to side with the girl group."

"Team Leader Lee may be able to do it, though."

"I'm thankful that you appreciate me so highly but....."

At that moment, the bell to the President's office rang. It was a call from the Chairman's office.

-President Lee. Are you with Team Leader Lee at the moment?

"Yes, Chairman. What is it?"

-If Team Leader Lee's there, can you send him up here? Right now.

"I understand."

It seemed urgent as the Chairman himself had called, and not through the secretary. While President Lee HyunJi was grabbing her head due to being interfered, KangYoon stood up straight away.

"Then... I'll go."

"...As you say."

KangYoon headed to the Chairman's office immediately. He had already explained the core points. This work had come too early. KangYoon thought that President Lee HyunJi would eventually give up as well.

When he entered the Chairman's office, there was Chairman Won JinMoon and a man in his late 30s with his hair dyed yellow, waiting for him.

"Welcome, Team Leader Lee."

"You called for me, sir?"

"Please introduce yourself. This is..."

However, the yellow-haired man looked up towards KangYoon's face whilst sitting as soon as he saw him.

[I'm called Akabashi Tao.]

[Lee KangYoon.]

They shook hands while Akabashi Tao was sitting down. Both Chairman Won JinMoon and KangYoon slightly frowned.

[I will get straight to the point. Lee KangYoon-san. Why are you interfering with my work?]

KangYoon immediately realized who this man was. This person was JooAh's Japanese mini album planner.

[You said interfering?]

[It is interfering. You worked together on the song and interfered with JooAh. I heard Korean people had a very wide pocket. But is that the case with planning too?]

He seemed to be angry. Amongst the Japanese KangYoon knew, there were very few who got angry directly.

They were usually people who ground the swords behind the back, but this person was exploding right in front of the person in question. This meant that his rage was quite big.

However, KangYoon was calm.

[You said a wide pocket?]

[Isn't that so? JooAh always talks about the name 'KangYoon'. If it was Lee KangYoon, he would do it this way, or that way. It's the same in this case. JooAh interfered with the song I had already approved and had even edited it. Shouldn't a singer believe in and follow a planner's words? JooAh doesn't do that at all. If I said to go this way, then she says Lee KangYoon wasn't like this and go another way. Is this right?]

[Then should the singer follow the planner blindly like a doll?]

KangYoon coldly started expressing his thoughts to producer Akabashi who spat out all those words in rage.

Chapter 50: Making It Work (3)

[A planner must make a singer able to trust in them. Isn't that so?]

[Do you mean that I wasn't able to do that?]

Producer Akabashi was enraged. Didn't KangYoon imply that JooAh had come to him because he himself couldn't make her trust his work?

Although Chairman Won JinMoon didn't understand the conversation, he could tell from their expressions that the conversation was heading in a bad direction.

“Team Leader Lee. Currently...”

Chairman Won JinMoon tried to join, but KangYoon's words came first.

[Isn't that too obvious? The singer voiced out that the song sounded a little strange. Shouldn't you at least pretend to listen?]

[There were no problems with the song. Are you saying that my senses are dull?]

['Senses' are subjective. Do you think you can judge whether a song has a problem or not that easily? To err is human and a planner is only human.]

[Then how did I keep my position until now if my senses were wrong? If you keep coming out like this, then I'll cancel the contract.]

Producer Akabashi's rage shot up to the skies. He was reckless. It seemed that a scratch had been inflicted on his smooth sailing pride as his face was cringing as much as it could.

Chairman Won JinMoon was also surprised and grabbed him. However, KangYoon's words didn't end there.

[So? Did all the singers you planned with that 'sense' of yours

succeed?]

[That's...]

[All the stars I planned for have become big. I have a 100% success rate. Even in that case, 'senses' cannot be trusted. That's because the populace thinks differently to a planner. I don't want to say something like this, but as far as I know, the latest 3 albums you produced have flopped. Honestly speaking, can you guarantee that JooAh won't be like that?]

[.....]

Producer Akabashi stopped his steps in the doorway. His pride was hurt to a humongous degree. However, if he really left after hearing that, then there was no way he could recover.

It was obvious that rumors that he ignored and threw away his work would spread. The only way now was to finish this on a good note or to squash KangYoon flat.

[...Phew. Ok, good. So, is JooAh going to you and you interfering with my work in various ways a good thing?]

[It isn't.]

[Even though you know it... You're quite shameless. You're rude, and you're the worst.]

[You're correct.]

KangYoon was shameless. Producer Akabashi's face turned red just seeing that. His face filled with rage.

“<ㄷ!!(Fuck!!)”

He screamed loudly. He couldn't endure without doing so. The secretaries quickly came to see what was happening after they heard that, but when Chairman Won JinMoon quietly gestured, they closed the door and exited.

A while later, KangYoon spoke to the now calmed down Producer Akabashi.

[I think that the priority of a planner is to make the singer able to trust in him/her. I think that the two are allied in a war against the populace. I'm a person who does the same work. I understand your feelings, producer, and I do feel sorry about it. However, I couldn't just leave JooAh alone when she was shivering due to anxiety.]

[Anxiety.....?]

[Yes. JooAh was anxious about the song. That is why she brought the song to me and even showed willingness to persuade the composer by herself. She was doing something completely different to you, producer. I do not know who is more correct. However, I do understand which is more important.]

KangYoon sorted out his breathing for a moment and said his point.

[Please make JooAh be able to have faith in you.]

[.....]

KangYoon silently bowed towards Chairman Won JinMoon and quietly left the Chairman's office.

“Whoa...”

Now that it was the 2 of them, Chairman Won JinMoon could only laugh awkwardly. He called for a secretary who could speak Japanese. Since he needed to talk with Producer Akabashi.

To finish off their talk about the Concert Team, KangYoon headed to the President Lee HyunJi's office again.

President Lee HyunJi kept thinking about what KangYoon said while he was away, and seemed to have decided as she put down the papers.

“We should give up.”

Of course, if they forcefully did it, the conclusion was that it was possible, but as KangYoon had said, there were no gains. From a management personnel's view like herself, she had to tearfully

declare a forfeit.

“I understand.”

“It’s a pity. If it was in the past, I would have done it no matter what... Did

I get old...?”

She seemed to be disappointed in her heart, as she picked up the papers that she put down again. She was a woman who had more desire to work than anyone else.

“There will be another opportunity. There will be a lot at the end of the year, so it’s not a bad choice to wait until then.”

“Fuu... Isn’t that when our kid’s debut?”

“Oh... You’re right.”

KangYoon clapped in realization. When it came to that season, the girl group he was planning had to debut. KangYoon had been setting the schedules to coincide with that time.

“Aaah. It seems we have to take it easy with the Concert Team. You’d have to focus on the girl group for a while. I need to be considerate towards you.”

“I will thankfully accept that consideration.”

“However, I am expecting great achievements. It’s you Team Leader Lee, so they won’t be ordinary right?”

KangYoon smiled. This kind of expectation was a pressure, but at the same time, brought him joy.

“I’ll do my best.”

“Good. Oh, about the studying we talked about last time, the lecture starts at the beginning of September. I already talked about it so going there beforehand to meet him early would be alright too.”

“I only need to listen to the class”

“He said that although he couldn’t register you as a student, he could go over the homework with you. Of course, that side would have something they want too. He won’t give you too much pressure so don’t worry about that. I will try to stop all of it.”

“Thank you.”

Now, he had the opportunity to learn music theory properly. KangYoon bowed his head to President Lee HyunJi and said his thanks. She just shook her head and gestured that it was alright.

President Lee HyunJi held out a pamphlet to KangYoon. It was about the lecture that KangYoon would listen to.

‘Professor Choi ChanYang, 38 years old, Hallyeo Arts University Composing Department professor eh...’

While KangYoon was reading down the pamphlet, President Lee HyunJi explained more.

“I said that you were completely clueless to musical theory, and he said for you to come to the basics class he does at S University. You remember the university that you did the performance with The ACE right?”

“Yes. I do.”

“He says he will open a Basic Harmonics lecture so do enjoy your time there. You have it good. You will listen to class with younger kids. You’ll be able to rejuvenate.”

“I’ll receive their energy fully.”

President Lee HyunJi teased KangYoon. KangYoon also replied well to her words and left the President’s Office.

When he went to his own office, now, it was JooAh who was waiting for him there.

“Oppa...”

“Haaa... Now, it’s you?”

For KangYoon, he wasn't that delighted to see JooAh since he got caught up in that incident because of her. JooAh also couldn't face him unrestrainedly like normal.

"I'm sorry. I heard you fought it out in the Chairman's office?"

"Yeah, quite magnificently at that. Why did you just have to make a big accident like such..."

"It's that guy who's strange. He keeps saying what he wants. You must know since you have spoken to him. He only does whatever he wants. I'm no doll. I'd get fed up"

JooAh seemed to get angry just thinking about it as her face turned red slightly. KangYoon only shook his head and offered her a cup of coffee.

"Thanks. Even so, You're the only one who thinks about me."

"Drink that and go reconcile."

"Don't wanna."

However, JooAh was stubborn even with KangYoon's words. KangYoon calmly spoke.

"As you said, that person was stubborn. He was also in the wrong. However, you have a problem too."

"Me, what?"

"A man, you know, lives with pride. But why do you keep comparing? He's already as depressed as he can be since he failed 3 times in a row. He must be pressured subconsciously."

"Do I need to care about that? He should have made me trust in him first."

"So you're saying you only have to receive?"

"That's..."

JooAh also had nothing to say.

"Hey, you must learn to give to others first. Of course, as you

said, it's right and proper for a planner to make the singer able to trust in him/her. However, the singer needs to trust in the planner for them to bring out their best. I'm sorry for sounding like such an old guy, but this is the basics of the basics. Is it not?"

"That's true but... That guy's saying that only he is correct!! What do I do about that!!?"

"To him, JooAh, you were too immature."

"Wait, do you mean that he was stubborn because I was lacking?"

JooAh's eyes burned since this touched on her pride. The juniors would be scared out of their wits if they saw this, but KangYoon calmly spoke.

"Think about it. You became big once. In their opinion, you got on Music Station somehow and you became a hot issue and became big. But the second time? You know that the second is more difficult than the first. Could that guy easily believe in you? There are many cases where big shot singers fail their next event. Moreover, you aren't Japanese but Korean. That person's stubbornness is naturally wrong, but don't you think there was this kind of reason?"

"....."

JooAh couldn't say anything. In fact, the person who compared that producer with KangYoon was JooAh herself. Thinking about it, there were many times where she provided the reason.

"...Tch."

However, she didn't seem to want to admit it easily as she cringed and stood up. She seemed to be a little disappointed in KangYoon. He knew that, but KangYoon didn't stop her.

"Looking at that, she's such a kid."

JooAh went out while grumbling, but KangYoon believed in her. If he did this much, he believed that she would do the rest by

herself.

“Science is built on facts, similar to the way a house is built on a foundation of bricks but an accumulation of facts cannot be considered as science any more than a pile of bricks as a house. – How many grammatical techniques were used in this sentence? Put your hands up if you know? Oh... Yeah. sleep...”

The English teacher who wore a thick pair of horn-rimmed glasses seemed to have given up and shook his head and continued the class alone.

Of course, the teacher wasn't completely alone. Since a few students including HeeYoon were listening to the class with bright eyes. Of course, they couldn't follow the explanation where there was more English than Korean.

‘Huh?’

But then, HeeYoon's mobile phone flashed lightly.

-Hyoon, Hyoon!! You have time today?

The message was from JooAh.

-Today???? When????

-Night!!!! ^. ^

-I can't go out at night cuz oppa will scold me..... Sob sob. T^T;;

-It's alright!! He'll be with us. Okay?

HeeYoon couldn't understand the exact meaning of the message. However, she thought that it wouldn't matter much as long as it was with her brother and sent back a reply.

-Okay,~ ^. ^

The message from JooAh ended with that. HeeYoon thought it was strange, but she quickly put away her phone and concentrated on the class.

As today was dialysis day, HeeYoon headed to the hospital.

She seemed to have gained a lot of stamina recently as she didn't feel that tired even after getting dialysis. She felt that her body was getting better so she felt better nowadays.

On the way to the hospital, HeeYoon called JooAh.

-HeeYoon!! What is it?

“You busy?”

-Nooo. You called me cuz of that message eh.

“Yeah. Something up?”

-No, it's not much... It's just to eat dinner together. Are you alright with that?

“I should talk to oppa about it.”

-Don't worry about that, I'll take care of that.

“Then I'm all good. I also look forward to seeing you, JooAh, after such a long time.”

-Okay, then see you there.

Unlike how they conversed usually, the call wasn't that long. HeeYoon headed to the hospital with light steps.

As always, KangYoon came to work while after being seen out by HeeYoon. He was about to start working in his office when he found an envelope, which didn't seem to be his, on his desk.

‘Dear Sir Lee KangYoon. What's this?’

He hadn't seen this envelope up until yesterday. KangYoon opened the envelope since it was addressed to him. He couldn't hide his shock after seeing the contents.

‘This is an invitation? M Hotel, 8 o'clock? Whoa... For me?’

Someone had sent him an invitation. M Hotel was one of the best hotels in the country. KangYoon pondered why someone would send him such an invitation.

‘Just who...’

A scout? Already? Or a bribe?

KangYoon thought all sorts of things while he started work.

It became night.

KangYoon headed to M Hotel with the invitation. When he showed the invitation, entry was easily granted. However, when he was guided inside, there were people who he all knew.

“Yeon JooAh, wait, HeeYoon too?”

“Oppa, you’re here.”

JooAh and HeeYoon greeted with liveliness while waving their hands. Surprise and joy crossed in KangYoon’s mind.

“Huh... It was you who sent the invitation?”

“No, the one who did was someone else. He’ll come soon. Oh, there he is.”

In the direction that JooAh pointed towards, two men, with eye-catching outfits, were slowly walking towards them. It was the head planner, Producer Akabashi; and Composer Shunji. JooAh waved at the two.

[You didn’t get lost, eh?]

[Korean hotels have good service.]

Producer Akabashi comfortably spoke with JooAh and greeted KangYoon.

[Sorry for being rude last time.]

[Not at all. It was I who was rude.]

Unlike the sharp attitude from the Chairman’s Office, he seemed very friendly. KangYoon shook hands with Producer Akabashi and greeted Composer Shunji, then sat down.

The dishes started being served one by one. While HeeYoon was

trying to eat the first hotel standard food of her life, Producer Akabashi spoke up first.

[I was rude last time. Thanks to KangYoon-san, this album is showing good reactions. Today, I prepared this seat. Please enjoy your meal.]

KangYoon was surprised. He knew that JooAh's new mini album had an explosive reaction in Japan as he had heard the news. Even so, he never thought that he would get treated like this.

[I never thought I would get treated like this.]

[In fact, I want to bring you to Japan, but I heard that your sister does not have a passport yet... Next time, please come to Japan with her. I will take you to the hot springs.]

Unlike when he first met KangYoon, his attitude had taken an 180-degree change. KangYoon looked at JooAh, confused.

“Oooh. You don't have to look at me like that. Whether if it's me, or the producer, we reconciled after being scolded a lot by you. We went with the later version that Composer Shunji had composed, too.

We only thought from our own point of view. We should have thought about it a little more.”

KangYoon finally understood. They each took a step back. KangYoon's words were the trigger. The fact that they hit it large was due to KangYoon. This was their method of repayment.

[This album was a huge hit too. Even though it's a mini-album, we're pressing the 3rd print... Sob sob. Thanks to that, I got my hands on some money.]

Composer Shunji seemed to feel good as well as he wanted to shout 'Banzai' while looking at JooAh. Thanks to this album, not only had he gained massive profit, his value as a composer increased by a large amount as well. Although he had to suffer a lot, this time, the results were great.

KangYoon waved his hands.

[It's fortunate that the results are good. Isn't it because everyone had worked hard?]

[If Team Leader Lee wasn't there, then there wouldn't be even that. We didn't know that the album would turn out so great. Thanks to that, I learned a lot from you. I got over my slump, and I also earned confidence. How should I repay this grace...]

[It's nothing like grace...]

KangYoon felt uncomfortable with Producer Akabashi acting so humble. He thought that he didn't play a large role in this. He just voices out his own opinion. However, to think that just that had affected another person a lot... He felt a little panicked.

[PD-san, My Nii-san is originally like that. He's an uninteresting guy who doesn't even show anything on his face.]

[Is that so? He's a great person.]

[He will get embarrassed the more you praise him, so let's just eat.]

He seemed to have become close to JooAh, as they now seemed to be unrestrained towards each other. KangYoon felt better since the conclusion was good.

He was delighted that he was treated to such a good meal, and could bring his sister here.

The enjoyable time flowed like that.

The hot summer was now ending, and cool winds started blowing.

The empty university started being filled with students. It was because the 2nd semester had started.

Along with the start of the semester, the quiet plaza or the lecture rooms started being filled with students, and there were

also many students who went to the library to spend their free time or to study.

Amongst those students was KangYoon.

“Hmm... Did I come too early?”

This was the first time he had applied for an early leave not because of HeeYoon but for himself.

As he had a lot of time left, he headed to the library. After he entered the library not as a student but as an ordinary civilian, he couldn't hide his surprise due to the absurd lot of books.

‘Wow, there's really a lot, where is it...’

KangYoon headed to the corner where there were materials about concerts. KangYoon's main interests lied in that area. After looking up the location on the information PC, he headed to the third floor immediately.

‘Found it.’

KangYoon headed to the corner where it was written ‘Arts’. There, he could see not only visual arts but music, concerts and various other things in the form of books.

Perhaps due to being it the beginning of the semester, there were hardly any people at all. KangYoon headed to where the books were about music and concerts. As the location wasn't that far, he could find it quickly.

‘Concert Produce... Ah damn, it's the English original.’

However, KangYoon couldn't hide his disappointment. All the books related to concerts were in their original languages. He looked for more with a little hope but all the books were in English or German, and there were none in Korean. In the end, they were all pies in the sky.

“So this is why not many people study planning or production.”

Although he heard that related departments were being created

nowadays, he also heard that the environment was quite weak as of yet.

Wasn't even KangYoon someone who came to this area after being acknowledged of his suffering on the scene? Realizing the reality, he became bitter.

With such a mind, he looked for quite a while before there was one book which caught his eyes.

-Basics of Concert Production.

Just one book, this was the only one in Korean. KangYoon was delighted and grabbed the book immediately.

'Producer, Stage representative, Manager in charge, actors, etc. 100 people have made this book. In Korea...'

KangYoon read the preface. The contents were that they made this book fit Korea by referencing various books since there were not many books about this area in Korean. KangYoon expectantly flipped the pages.

'What the heck? There are too few examples.'

However, KangYoon was disappointed. Only the basic theory was explained and there were too little examples. It was literally just the basics.

Now that he thought about it, the book wasn't even that thick. It was literally just a theory book explaining the basics of the basics.

When KangYoon read through all the pages, he felt a presence behind him. When he looked back, a young girl he had seen for the first time was standing in front of him.

"Excuse me..."

As it was the library, her voice was small.

"What is it?"

"I'm sorry but... Did you finish that book?"

“I only have a little left. What is it?”

The woman who called KangYoon was a stereotypical university student with a slim body stature wearing a short skirt.

The straight hair, which came to her shoulders were eye-catching. KangYoon noticed immediately that her eyes were fixed on the book more than he was.

“Do you need this book?”

“Yes, yes. I need to photocopy it. If you’re not planning to borrow it... Could you give it to me?”

KangYoon calmly looked at her before giving her the book.

“Thank you. Phew... This really isn’t much..”

She seemed to be truly relieved as she took out a chocolate bar from her bag and gave it to KangYoon.

“I’m alright.”

“No, please. This is the only thing I can give you...”

“It’s alr...”

“See you later.”

She put the chocolate bar in KangYoon’s hands and left with the book quickly.

“Kids these days are quite lively.”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders at the first acquaintance he met in the university.

The time came for the lecture and KangYoon headed to the lecture room. Although he was granted permission by the professor, as he was only sitting in, he sat towards the back.

Professor Choi ChanYang started calling the register, and the students replied one by one before the lecture started.

“Shin WooJin.”

“Yes.”

“[Lee ChangYeon](#).”

(T/N: Lee ChangYeon is the author’s name. Lol.)(E/N: lol)

“Yes.”

There were cases where the same voice could be heard twice, but the professor pretended to not know and just skipped. This was very common in a liberal arts lecture.

The last surname in the alphabetical order, ‘Ha’ was next.

“Ha JiYeon.”

“.....”

“Is student Ha JiYeon not here?”

When Professor Choi ChanYang was about to mark her as absent, the rear door opened and a girl hurried in.

“pant pant... I’m sorry.”

“What is your name?”

“Ha JiYeon.”

“If you do this next time, you’ll be marked as absent.”

Professor Choi ChanYang changed the ‘absent’ to ‘present’, and the girl called Ha JiYeon sat on the empty desk next to KangYoon.

“Today will be the orientation...”

The lecture started, and Ha JiYeon dumbfoundedly opened her mouth wide after she saw KangYoon.

“You’re... the book last time?”

“Ah...”

KangYoon also remembered. This lady was the one who took the book from him.

Chapter 51: Girl Group Start (1)

Min JinSeo was currently on Namiseon(Island). She was taking a photo shoot in a forest within Namiseom that would go on a women's magazine.

“Yes, that's it!! Can you smile a little?”

Amongst the continuous camera shutter sounds, Min JinSeo was displaying various expressions; sometimes it was bewitching; sometimes vivacious.

“JoonSoo, tilt the reflecting disc a little.”

“Yes.”

The man moving the reflecting disc covered with foil kept moving locations to erase the shadow from Min JinSeo's face while the photographer kept pressing the shutter.

Although it was a windy forest, the weather was still hot so it was a difficult photo shoot.

Wearing a pink dress, the photo shoot kept on for a long time. After sending the results through the laptop, the photographer and the staff's expressions became bright while they were looking at the results with the magazine company's personnel.

“Her expression is so... Is dear JinSeo really 3rd-year middle schooler?”

“She is quite the item. I feel that everything that needs to be there is there on her face.”

“She might capture many a suitor when she grows up, eh?”

While everyone was voicing their opinions while looking at the result, Min JinSeo approached. She wasn't that satisfied with the results, but as the people were full of praises, she instead became embarrassed.

They decided to have a resting time before going to the next

location after changing clothes. While the staff were resting in their respective teams, her manager, Kim JooHwan, handed her a bottle of water and a towel.

“Thank you, oppa.”

“Not at all. It’s my job.”

During the resting time, Min JinSeo conversed with other people and asked about the equipment. As she was a teenager who still had a lot of curiosity, the people were happy to answer her questions.

Moreover, her appearance played a big role as well. It wasn’t exaggerated to say that the venue was centered around her.

“Here.”

“Thank you!!”

“You don’t have to be that formal...”

Min JinSeo was also embarrassed when a staff from the lightings team was jumping around in happiness with her signature.

Although a lot of things happened that day, the photo shoot in Namiseom ended successfully. The photographer wasn’t stingy with his praises while saying that it would be a masterpiece, and the magazine company also did a thumbs-up.

When the photo shoot ended, the sun was already setting. Min JinSeo got on the van while dragging her exhausted body along.

The road to home from Namiseom was quite far. Due to her fatigue, Min JinSeo fell asleep mid way. Although she wasn’t fully used to sleeping in in the van, she felt relaxed and a tinge of happiness when she thought that other people needed her.

“JooHwan-seonbae-nim. Did you hear about Team Leader?”

“Which one? Our Team Leader?”

“No, I mean Team Leader Lee KangYoon.”

However, just as she was about to fall asleep, she could hear a strange thing. It was the conversation between Manager Kim JooHwan and the road manager.

“Team Leader Lee? Why? Did he start another concert? Ayy... those people will be dying right now.”

“It’s not that. Well... Even if I have to suffer, I want to go to that team. Even though work is hard on that team, isn’t the bonus very generous?”

“You’re right... The ACE team from last time apparently went overseas. They got a paid holiday on top of a bonus. Ah... so envious. So, what is it?”

“He did another one yet again. With JooAh’s mini album.”

“Oooh, that? The one where he fought it out with the Japanese Producer? I heard it hit a jackpot?”

Min JinSeo was listening to see if they were insulting KangYoon, but there was nothing like that. They were envious of KangYoon and were admiring him. Saying that the Japanese Producer even treated him to a meal in a hotel, they were expressing their envy.

“So envious, alright. But is that Team Leader not planning to marry?”

“No way. Why are you worried about that, seonbae? Team Leader Lee is the best husband material so the women in Cheongdam will be all over him.”

“Cheongdam? No way, that’s being too generous. Well... you’re right. He’s tall, has a high salary, oh, I don’t know about his household. But who cares, the person himself is the best. Right?”

“That’s what I mean. Ah, I’ll lose if I get envious. I should do well myself.”

While driving at full speed on the highway, the talk show of the two men continued.

‘Husband material? What’s that and what?’

However, as Min JinSeo was listening to it, her arms trembled a little. As her sleepiness flew away in an instant, she couldn’t fall asleep until they arrived.

As the first lecture was the orientation, it ended quite soon. KangYoon went to the front of the lecture room to greet Professor Choi ChanYang.

“Professor.”

“Oh, Mr. Lee KangYoon.”

Professor Choi ChanYang realized who KangYoon was right away.

As President Lee HyunJi’s senior, he was requested to take care of KangYoon. After a brief exchange of greetings, they headed to a nearby café.

“Thank you for letting me listen in on the class.”

“Not at all. I should have given you a private study really... I can only say sorry to do things like this. If you can’t come to lecture in the future, then please come to my office.”

“Thank you for your consideration. I really might feel like I’m going to school.”

Although a private study was preferable, listening to lecture in a university was also a refreshing experience. KangYoon found it new to listen to lectures along with students.

Professor Choi ChanYang asked KangYoon various things about on-the-scene work. Meeting someone like KangYoon was very important for him since he could not feel the ‘atmosphere’ of a real job at the school.

KangYoon was especially becoming a hot icon nowadays. He asked various things related to the trend of the songs.

“...I knew it. The trend is starting to change. A light song which is comfortable on the ears, you say...”

“Visual music will become very important. However, that doesn’t mean that audio music is not important. ‘Light’ means that we need to satisfy the populace faster. The composition will become very difficult, not to mention the skills of the singers.”

Professor Choi ChanYang agreed to KangYoon’s words.

“You’re right. I should also emphasize this point a bit while teaching the students. Trend... trend you say... I’ve learned a lot today.”

“I will also learn a lot from you, professor, from now on.”

The time became 11 o’clock at night while they were conversing. All the customers in the café had left, and they were the only ones left. The employee was starting to give them eye signals.

“If you read the book I gave you before coming to class, then it will help you a lot.”

“Thank you for your consideration. Please take care of me in the future.”

The two shook hands politely. Then they separated like that.

When he went home on a late train, HeeYoon’s room was still bright.

“You came?”

“You aren’t sleeping yet?”

“You weren’t here, oppa. Oh? What book is that?”

HeeYoon seemed to become curious about the book that KangYoon had brought as she took it and flipped several pages over. However, she eventually closed the book and gave it back after seeing so many tadpoles.

“Eh? It’s a music book. So difficult.”

“Music is originally hard.”

“You’re learning music now? Amazing.”

“Well, this oppa is quite amazing.”

“...Don’t make me stop praising you.”

KangYoon laughed at HeeYoon’s light criticisms, changed his clothes, and went to the bathroom. The fatigue of the day was best solved with a shower.

“Basic harmonics eh... Will I be of help to my brother if I study this?”

HeeYoon started flipping through the pages on the sofa. 1st and 5th and such incomprehensible terms about harmonics were written down, but she kept on reading.

When KangYoon came out after a shower, he could see her absorbed in the book.

‘since when was HeeYoon so interested in music?’

KangYoon planned to sleep after reading the book a little, but he had no plans in doing so while interrupting her. He just quietly entered his room.

Recently, President Lee HyunJi was not in a good mood since the large-scale concert planning was nullified. Of course, she didn’t do something like being bossy to her subordinate, but she was sensitive due to having no work.

‘Ahh... This is no good...’

President Lee HyunJi just finished a call and was shaking her head. It was a request of a comeback of a 5-man male idol group. However, they had no popularity to speak of, and the company behind their back was quite small, so she just said she would think about it and ended the call.

It was obvious that they were aiming for an effect that KangYoon

had made with SeasonS.

‘It’s this kind of calls mostly...’

Most of the calls were from singers who wanted to become big with a single big impact. However, President Lee HyunJi wanted a long-term profitable work rather than those short-term ones. She didn’t want to hear from Chairman Won JinMoon that she brought work with no substance, again.

While President Lee HyunJi was thinking about various things, the secretarial office contacted her that KangYoon had come. She pushed the paperwork aside and met KangYoon.

“Welcome. Did you have a good lecture?”

“Thanks to you. The professor seemed to be nice.”

A coffee time talking about Professor Choi ChanYang and various other things started.

“There aren’t any good work coming in nowadays. They’re all like SeasonS.”

“Is that so? I’m fine with it, though...”

“If we keep doing those sort of work, then our image will be solidified. We now have to take charge of a big project and leap high. Ah, concert...”

She sighed, disappointed that they had missed the work with the large-scale concert due to JooAh. KangYoon also understood how she felt and didn’t say anymore.

“I will mind about the kids only for a while.”

“Please do. Oh, I’ve seen an interesting report. Promoting each member separately, eh...”

“Yes.”

President Lee HyunJi looked for the report that KangYoon had submitted yesterday.

“Promoting each member first and not as a team... the directors are all looking for something they could use with their eyes wide open, saying that the amount of money used is already too much... they will become even more chaotic.”

“They will try to eat me alive.”

“Giggle.”

President Lee HyunJi found it hard to stifle her laughter.

“That’s interesting. The promotion team will be busy. How are you planning to advertise them?”

“First, I’m planning to go for a noise marketing. In Han JooYeon’s case, I’m planning to send out a UCC video of her singing. Also, it’s planned for her to appear in the ‘Thanksgiving Country-wide Song Mimic Festival’.”

“A broadcast and a UCC. That sure has an impact. However, she will need a lot of practice if it’s a song mimic. There might also be some anti-fans appearing saying that a trainee appeared on TV.”

“I already told her to practice since 1 month ago. Anti-fans, well... I’m considering it as a type of interest. That amount of risk should be undertaken.”

“Well... Even so, to think there will be anti-fans starting from her trainee days... quite a pity.”

President Lee HyunJi signed in approval right away.

“I’ll take this to the Chairman myself.”

“I understand.”

“Then please work hard.”

KangYoon bade farewell and left the President’s office.

KangYoon was having an interview with Han JooYeon in his office.

“Did you practice a lot?”

“Yes.”

Han JooYeon nodded strongly. After she had her holiday, Han JooYeon was notified by KangYoon that she would go on TV. After that, she practiced ‘To You’ by Kang MinJoo, again and again. It wasn’t a simple practice. She copied her voice and even her breathing ‘exactly’.

“Was there anything difficult?”

“Everything is difficult. The pitch is high, and the breathing is also very

long. Even so, our styles are similar so I think I managed to do it somehow.”

“That’s good.”

It was KangYoon who had recommended ‘To You’ to Han JooYeon. It was because he had judged that the singer Kang MinJoo’s song would go well with Han JooYeon. In the ‘past’, Han JooYeon also sang Kang MinJoo’s song after a remake. However she didn’t copy her exactly like this.

“Then let’s have a listen to it.”

When she heard that, Han JooYeon stood up and went to a wide place. After positioning herself, she warmed up her voice and started singing.

“You are— a good – person– But — you don’t know –”

Blue musical notes started flowing out from Han JooYeon. However, perhaps due to there being no microphones or accompaniment, there was no light. KangYoon observed the blue musical notes closely.

“Sometimes — the tears well up in me–”

It sounded the same as Kang MinJoo’s song. The musical notes were also constant. There were no flaws as to her mimic. However, to KangYoon, it was strangely not satisfying.

‘What’s the problem?’

From a glance, it sounded like Kang MinJoo’s voice. However, the feeling that KangYoon had wasn’t that good. Something lacking, it felt like a donut without the jam filling.

“JooYeon.”

In the end, KangYoon stopped the song.

“Yes? Was it no good?”

“It’s not that. Did you try singing along with the accompaniment?”

“Yes.”

“Did you use a microphone as well?”

“Not yet...”

“Let’s do that now.”

“What?”

KangYoon headed to the underground studio with the dumbfounded Han JooYeon. To grab at a thread that he could not yet grab, he wanted to see what the problem was. He led Han JooYeon thinking that he would be able to see it, if the proper conditions are set.

“Wow... So this is...”

As she had no experience in coming to the underground studio yet, Han JooYeon couldn’t hide her exclamations after seeing the clean and wide studio. However, KangYoon had no leisure to listen to such words. He pushed her inside the booth and made her grab the microphone.

“Say, ah ah.”

-Ah ah.

“You know how to set the sounds right?”

-Yes.

KangYoon quickly set the sounds. After setting the voice to match Han JooYeon, he found the music recording of the song and signaled the start immediately.

-Should I do it straight away?

“Yes. Let’s begin.”

Han JooYeon didn’t know why KangYoon was hurrying so much, but still followed his orders. The song started.

-You are— a good – person– But — you don’t know —

The light that the musical notes were making were white. Although it wasn’t strong, it wasn’t weak either. KangYoon was confused.

‘What’s the problem?’

Although the singing continued, there was no big change in the light. It was ordinary. Until the 4-minute long song ended, the brightness of the light didn’t change that much.

The song ended, and Han JooYeon left the booth, but KangYoon wasn’t aware of her due to thinking.

‘...It wasn’t that bad. But I think there’s something missing. If we can fill that piece, then it will become a perfect song mimic...’

“Team Leader.”

Whilst he was absorbed in thinking, when Han JooYeon called out to him, KangYoon woke up from his thoughts.

“Oh, sorry.”

“How was my singing? It might have been no good since I was nervous...”

“You were good. I think you’ve practiced a lot.”

“Really? That’s good. I really put a lot of effort to mimic miss Kang MinJoo. I even worked hard to follow the breathing exactly

as well. That was good.”

At that moment, something flashed in KangYoon’s head.

‘Breathing?’

Singers had their unique breathing patterns. It was a difference in the timing of the breath.

“JooYeon, when you sing the third verse, when do you breathe?”

“You mean the ‘You are’ part, right? I need to breath once before ‘person’. It becomes difficult for me if I don’t”

KangYoon played the audio recording immediately after he heard that.

-You are— a good – person– But — you don’t know —

Han JooYeon was right. However, there was a difference in the length of the breath. And the song should have burst out a little more at the end. It was a minute difference.

“Ah.....”

“It’s hard.....”

The other parts were the same.

He thought ‘maybe’, and it was really a problem with breathing.

KangYoon wrote the things on the sheet music that Han JooYeon had brought and she also learned attentively.

After making her go inside the booth again, he stood in front of the mixer.

“Let’s do this.”

With KangYoon’s words, the music recording flowed out and Han JooYeon’s song started flowing out as well.

Chapter 52: Girl Group Start (2)

-You are — a good – person-but — you don't know —

‘This is it!!’

The musical notes coming out of Han JooYeon were constant. The light emitted from the notes combining was brilliant. As ‘To You’ was a song which became a massive hit, the effect was enormous when she sang it in the same way.

-Do you know — the single person in my heart —

KangYoon closed his eyes. Now, it was to the point that it was confusing whether this was being sung by Kang MinJoo or Han JooYeon. The beat, the voice, and even the breathing synchronised so well it was a perfect mimic.

The song ended, and when Han JooYeon came out, KangYoon wordlessly replayed the recorded song.

“I sung this?”

Han JooYeon also doubted whether this was the song she sung or not. Even she was confused to whether this was the AR by Kang MinJoo or her. KangYoon wordlessly patted her shoulders.

“You’ve practiced hard.”

“Thank you.”

Even after KangYoon quietly left, Han JooYeon replayed her own song again and again and enjoyed the excitement.

Meeting.

With the team members, KangYoon was discussing about Han JooYeon, who would be the first to be shown to the world.

“Chief Kim, is the [UCC](#) going well?”

(T/N: UCC generally refers to videos in Korea)

When KangYoon asked Chief Kim JungRyul of the Promotion Team, he answered confidently.

“Yes. Han JooYeon did well so a satisfying picture came out.”

“Let’s talk after we see it.”

One of the members of the Promotion Team, Yu ChangSeok, played the project and the video in which Han JooYeon singing in the studio showed up on the screen. She was singing a pop song, which many people knew, and it sounded very smooth. As it was through a video, KangYoon could not see any light. Even so, he could feel that Han JooYeon was passionately singing with all her might, so it wasn’t bad.

“That’s not bad. Please release it the moment she appears on TV.”

“I understand.”

KangYoon kept talking about the budget, the process, etc. The team members asked for KangYoon’s opinion on the parts they were in charge of while they talked about their circumstances, and they voiced their opinions to compromise the situation. KangYoon sometimes accepted, sometimes rejected their opinions and lead the meeting.

“I think this should be enough about Han JooYeon.”

Finishing with that, all of them sighed. This was the moment when the rookies prepared in the company were stepping out for real. Thinking that they would get busy for real once it started, they resolved themselves.

The meeting ended, and KangYoon headed to the 3rd floor where the girls would be busy practicing. Today there was no group practice, so the were practicing by themselves. He immediately went into the room where Han JooYeon was practicing.

“Team Leader...”

“Did I interrupt you?”

“Not at all.”

Han JooYeon was practicing the song that would be broadcasted by herself. She looked surprised after seeing KangYoon, but still welcomed him. When KangYoon gave her a bottle of water like always, she politely received it and sat. The time KangYoon comes was resting time.

“The recordings’ next week right?”

“Yes. I sure am nervous.”

“It’s your first time. It’s no wonder that you’re nervous.”

“Are... you going as well, Team Leader?”

“Me? Let’s see...”

“I’m sorry, but if it’s okay with you could you please... go with me that day?”

“Huh?”

KangYoon wondered what was up. But he was given the reason right away.

“JinGyung-unni told me that I can be rest assured no matter what happens if I’m with you, Team Leader. I’m more cowardly than you think I am. If it isn’t a bad timing for you, then please.”

“JinGyung did? It seems you two are close.”

“She advised me a lot since I was a trainee. I heard a lot about you, Team Leader, from her. She told me that anything’s possible with you, Team Leader...”

Following JooAh and now Kim JinGyung too... Every time he heard these words, KangYoon honestly felt awkward. From now was emergency status. However, that emergency status was due to Han JooYeon, so he could not refuse either.

“Alright.”

“Thank you.”

“Sheesh, really... I need to work too...”

Looking at KangYoon grumbling, she did feel sorry. However, the priority was to calm her nervous heart. She thought that it would be better if KangYoon was there during the nervous first recording.

KangYoon left Han JooYeon’s practice room and headed to Christie An. She was in the middle of being trained about her image management with an external tutor.

“The expression is especially important. Expression. When you smile, the facial muscles...”

“.....”

KangYoon silently entered through the back door and saw that Christie An was lifting the corner of her mouth and the corner of her eyes, which people didn’t use a lot of, with her fingers. The external tutor emphasized again and again that she should use all her facial muscles. After hearing that a pretty face was no more than a decoration, Christie An clenched her teeth and followed the tutor’s words.

“Shall we rest a little?”

“...Yes.”

It was a sitting lecture, but to Christie An, it was a very hard time. She laid deep into her seat when she found KangYoon standing at the back of the practice room and she abruptly jumped up.

“Team Leader!!”

“Lie down. I’m not here to interrupt your rest.”

Even so, Christie An could not lie down. KangYoon was already someone she was awkward with, but after she saw him work with JooAh, she felt even more awkward. KangYoon offered her to sit,

and only then did she sit down.

“Do you know why you’re receiving this kind of training?”

“I don’t.”

Even so, Christie An was very honest. KangYoon like her honest answer and told her the answer immediately.

“You did hear that JooYeon will go on TV soon, right?”

“Yes.”

“Next is your turn.”

“Sorry!?”

Even she, who did not show ripples that much normally, raised her voice very high.

“I... Am I also going on TV?”

“No, you won’t. You do know why JooYeon is going on TV, right?”

“I heard that we will be revealed one by one.”

“Yes. Next up is your turn. However, the method is a little different.”

“Then what...”

“Magazine advertising.”

“Sorry?!”

To think that she would be revealed through advertising, which is known to be done by famous celebrities...

Hearing KangYoon’s incomprehensible words, Christie An’s expression colored in doubt.

“There’s a brand that our company is investing in. We will use you for the advert that that company will be making.”

“Oh, you mean Dearing House? The designs of cosmetics there were quite pretty.”

“Really? I don’t know about it that much. Anyway, you will be doing a cosmetics advert there. That’s why you’re doing this practice now, so you need to be serious about it. You do know of the concept, right?”

“Yes. An expressionless princess becoming lively after using the cosmetics right? I laughed when I saw it.”

“I heard the ad focuses on the ‘Before’ and the ‘After’. So you have to practice smiling ‘well’, get it?”

“Yes!!”

Christie An answered powerful. In fact, she was kind of expectant on what she would be doing ever since she heard that Han JooYeon was going on TV. However, since she was told to practice her expressions so much, she was disappointed. However, an advert... It didn’t matter whether the scale was big or small. She felt like she was flying.

“Oh, there’s not much guarantee in this advert. So just think of it as going out to eat some meat.”

“...Yes.”

Of course, she did get a little disappointed at KangYoon’s last words.

Autumn was a season where girls’ hearts became all fluffy... yeah right.

The vacation in the summer was practically the last rest. After that, a literal ‘death schedule’ was given to the girls. A Mon-Tue-Wed-Thur-Fri-Fri-Fri schedule, no, a Fri-Fri-Fri-Fri-Fri-Fri-Fri schedule rained upon them like the monsoon season.

“Uaaaaaaaaaaaaa—————!”

A rare group practice. Jung MinAh plopped onto the ground with steam covering her body. Christie An, who would usually use Jung

MinAh's stomach as a pillow, seemed to be too tired to do that today as she was rolling around in the place she was practicing at.

"....Ahahaha... This is somewhere and I'm Jung MinAh. Am I an existence born to practice..."

Jung MinAh was seeing stars as she was going insane from the cruel practice. No matter if she had a steel-like stamina, this kind of insane practice schedule was not easy at all.

"HanYu... Are you alright?"

"...No. How about you, unni?"

"I'm melting..."

Ailee Jung seemed to want to feel the coldness of the floor as she kept rolling around all over the floor. Opposite, Seo HanYu gracefully poured water over a face in attempt to make the heat fly away.

Lee SamSoon and Han JooYeon next to her had long since closed their eyes.

However, their rest didn't last long. That was because the super guy had appeared in the practice room – KangYoon.

"Hey, hey, wake up."

"Uuuu... Who is it..."

"Team Leader."

"Kehk..."

Lee SamSoon was brilliantly held up by Jung MinAh and was sat down. KangYoon seemed to be used to the nose-piercing smell of sweat, as he handed out bottles of water to the girls as if nothing had affected him. While everyone was quenching their thirst with big gulps, he finally brought out the topic.

"Thanks for your hard work, girls. This is the first time I saw you all together after the vacation, right?"

“.....Yes.”

Their answers contained no strength. Of course, it wasn't that KangYoon expected one from them.

“You did hear that you will be introduced one by one, right?”

“Yes.”

“After that, we will make you known officially after we invite the directors and the related people. We will announce when you will debut, and what concept you will go with.”

“Ah.....”

The girls all felt like fatigue had flown away. KangYoon's words meant that, they will be evaluated before they were introduced to the world.

“Is it like a showcase?”

When Han JooYeon asked, KangYoon shook his head.

“No, this will only be with the related personnel, so the concept is kind of different. We're also looking into broadcasting your debut process, but I'm not too sure about that.”

“W... wait. You will broadcast our debut process?”

Jung MinAh grabbed KangYoon's passing-by words.

“Not confirmed. Why?”

“Then you will record our daily lives and struggles, everything? Including the dorms?”

“I said it's not confirmed. We're looking into it. I will mention it again when it's confirmed. We don't know what may happen. What's important now is that you will go on stage.”

“.....”

Everyone became silent. The first stage with the 6 of them was the one they did at the orphanage. After that, they only practiced to death, but had not shown themselves in front of others.

“You never danced with heels on, right?”

“Yes. Not yet.”

Han JooYeon answered as their representative.

“From now, you will practice with heels on, got it?”

“Yes.”

“Also, your title song will come out soon.”

Everyone looked at each other with the expression that said ‘what should have come has finally come’. This was a song only for them. They finally felt that they were becoming singers from trainees. There was the pressure of having to wear heels, but the words about the title song made them rejoice.

KangYoon left after the notice, and the girls were in a mess.

“Hey, hey. He said heels!! Ah, I’ve never worn them before.”

Jung MinAh had nothing to do with heels. She hated inconvenient items. Meanwhile, Seo HanYu looked confident.

“You will get used to them once you wear it a lot. And if we say it, they will give us ones with wide heels, so it will be alright.”

“Really? I’m still worried though. I have a hard time balancing since my ankles are thin.”

Seo HanYu consoled Jung MinAh.

However, the most worried person was none other than Lee SamSoon.

“I have the worst affinity with heels though, what do I do? They will definitely give me a pair with high heels.”

Lee SamSoon’s face colored with worry. She had a prior experience of just going barefoot since she just wasn’t compatible with heels.

Of course, it wasn’t just her. All the girls were having similar worries.

KangYoon was busy due to the girls' debut, but he didn't forget to attend the lectures.

Having finished work early, KangYoon headed to the lecture room of S university after lunch.

Since he had arrived a little early, KangYoon could see students having conversations. Couples, men and women were all joyfully conversing in groups. Listening in, they were mostly conversations about the opposite sex. Men talked about what kind of girls they had met, and the women talked about what kind of men they had met. Such simple, yet joyful stories.

‘Good times.’

He smiled looking at the students. He remembered his own twenties when he was dragged around by his busy life. He had lived without any room for leisure while thinking only about HeeYoon. He momentarily pondered about what kind of life he would have had if he had such times. Of course, these were all useless thoughts.

‘Although I couldn't, I wish for HeeYoon to go to university.’

Looking at the students entering the lecture room, KangYoon thought about HeeYoon. He really wished that HeeYoon would be able to enjoy an ordinary college life, like them. No, he was planning to make it that way.

When the lecture time arrived, professor Choi ChanYang entered with the register like a set clock. Along with that, the seat next to KangYoon became occupied as well.

“Pant pant. I'm not late today. Hello?”

“Oh, hello.”

It was the tardy student from last time, Ha JiYeon. Answering the professor's roll call, she opened her textbook immediately.

“Harmonics are divided into...”

The lecture started and she focused harder than anyone else. Even KangYoon was affected by that. Although they sat at the very back, their passion for learning was great to the point that people near them sneaked glances at them.

“Let’s rest for a moment before we continue.”

Professor Choi ChanYang left for a moment and it became resting time. KangYoon was stretching his arms when Ha JiYeon held out a canned drink to him.

“Oh, thanks.”

“Not at all. This isn’t much. What is your name?”

“I’m Lee KangYoon. What about you?”

“I’m Ha JiYeon. I major business management. What about...”

“I’m an auditor.”

“Ah...”

After that, she seemed like she hesitated with her next words. However, her eyes regained their brilliance and continued speaking.

“That professor is apparently well known for chasing auditors out. Saying that lectures without prizes are meaningless or something? This lecture is fun so auditors sit in every year. It’s interesting to see an auditor after 3 weeks.”

“Really?”

“Yes, so please be careful. I knew you didn’t look so easy. Oh, sorry. I said something rude, didn’t I?”

Ha JiYeon was very lively. Thanks to that, KangYoon didn’t have a boring time during the rest. Ha JiYeon seemed to have an interest in fashion as she talked about clothes and school life, which made KangYoon interested, and KangYoon also answered her every now and then.

The lecture began, and KangYoon started focusing. The world of harmonics which he had seen for the first time was very new to him.

“1st, 4th, 5th, and 8th are called the Perfect intervals, and 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th are called the Major intervals. It’s easier to understand if you think of the piano. C to E is a 3rd, C D E makes a major 3rd. Meanwhile, C D E F makes a perfect 4th. Also...”

KangYoon wrote down all of Professor Choi ChanYang’s notes he wrote on the blackboard. As this was the first lecture, which was basic theory, the contents weren’t that difficult. In some way, this was like maths. Looking next to him, he found Ha JiYeon making a confused expression even while writing down on her notes.

Professor Choi ChanYang’s lecture was not fast. He said everything that was needed, and took examples when needed. The students could all focus thanks to the suitable examples, even though it may get a little boring with all the harmonics theory.

“Let’s stop here today.”

“Thanks for your work, sir.”

As soon as the lecture ended, the students left like the receding tides. Today, the students who fought against all the tadpoles went back home with fatigue over their faces.

“Mr. KangYoon. Do you have time this evening?”

KangYoon was also about to leave with the tide, when Professor Choi called for him.

“Yes, it is alright...”

“How about we have dinner together?”

KangYoon left with professor Choi ChanYang and headed to the parking area. On his high-class sedan, the two headed to a restaurant near the Han river.

Unlike Professor Choi who looked used to this as he ordered,

KangYoon wasn't so much. In the end, he ordered the same thing as him and coughed awkwardly.

"It seems you don't come to places like this so often."

"Yes. Since I prefer Korean food over western food."

"Oh, my. It seems I was a little rude. I apologize."

"Not at all. I don't particularly hate anything."

KangYoon politely said it was okay and started eating the bread that came out as appetizer. It wasn't that hard to follow the etiquette for eating food at a high class restaurant when he copied Professor Choi ChanYang.

"I'll buy today, so please eat comfortably."

"This... Then I'll excuse myself."

He must have had his reasons. KangYoon comfortably picked up the knife. Soon, the main dish, the steak, came out along with wine. The faint aroma of wine made him feel like the steak was melting in his mouth.

When they were almost finished eating, Professor Choi ChanYang brought up the main topic.

"Isn't it boring to learn just the basic theory?"

"Not at all. Instead, it feels like I'm climbing up step by step and it's nice."

"That's fortunate. Then, do you have any thoughts in learning faster?"

Of course, if he could learn it faster, then he wouldn't have to worry about wasting time, so it was good. KangYoon asked in confusion.

"Is there a good method?"

"There's a small club that I'm in charge of. I'm giving out my advice about their songs from time to time. Would you....."

“A small club, you say..... What kind of club is it?”

“It’s a club that composes songs and plays them. A band, to say. Around 5 people gather to talk about music while getting closer to each other.”

If it was a small club about composing, then KangYoon felt like he wouldn’t receive any pressure. He didn’t think that he would be able to go there often, but he did feel like it would be a good opportunity to learn their free ways of thinking while discussing with them, and learn music theory as well.

“I understand.”

When KangYoon accepted, Professor Choi ChanYang replied with his uniquely soft smile.

“What do I do...”

Han JooYeon kept sighing in front of the front door. Thanks to not being able to sleep the past night, there were dark circles under her eyes. She counted sheep all night, and tried all sorts of methods to sleep, but in the end, she couldn’t even sleep for 2 hours. First time on the TV came with a lot of nervousness.

“Unni, your eyes are no joke...”

“It’s so bad, right?”

“Do you think you can cover that up with makeup? It really looks serious...”

Seo HanYu’s expression colored in worry as she was about to leave in her school uniform to go to school.

“It wasn’t this bad, but last night, I couldn’t sleep, and even ‘that’ arrived...”

“Eek? No way... ‘that’?”

She was kicked while down.

The demon of ‘that day’ that comes once a month had assaulted

her.

“What will you do? Why does it have to be today of all days... Doesn't your stomach hurt?”

“Not that much. Before that, can you lend me ‘that’? I ran out. I'll pay you back later.”

“Yes. wait a minute.”

Han JooYeon borrowed the female products from Seo HanYu, before hurrying to set out. If she had to go to the company to meet KangYoon and go out for recording later, then time was running out.

Although she would also undergo makeup at the TV station, she put on heavy makeup before going out. She didn't want to be the center of attention on the way.

At the company, KangYoon had already finished preparing, and was waiting for her.

“Eh?”

However, KangYoon's expression turned strange as soon as he saw Han JooYeon's face.

“Did you not have enough sleep yesterday?”

“...Yes.”

“The bags under your eyes are huge. It wasn't like this normally, was it?”

“.....”

Pimples, dark circles, freckles and such face-related talks were a taboo for women.

However, KangYoon was very direct.

To him, a celebrity's face was his work.

Han JooYeon panicked since this the first time it happened, but what was important now was not that.

“I couldn’t sleep because I was too nervous. Will I... be alright?”

“It can’t be helped. Get on first.”

Han JooYeon got on the car, and KangYoon paid his attention to what she brought. Normally, she didn’t even carry around even a small pouch containing makeup. However, she was carrying one today.

‘Hmm.... Is it that day?’

He hadn’t worked as a manager for 7 years for nothing. There were some women whose dark circles were especially worse on that certain day. Han JooYeon was also like that. Moreover, she looked tense as well, which made KangYoon be sure about it.

KangYoon quietly called for coordinator Yoo SeHee who was checking over the stuff.

“Team Leader, you called?”

“You know how to do her makeup, right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I think it’s that day for her today, so please mind her a little more. The day is quite unfortunate.”

“I understand. Team Leader, how did you know that?”

“Well... from experience. Well, then. Please take care of her.”

“Yes, Team Leader.”

KangYoon did the final check, and they departed for the TV station.

After arriving, KangYoon left first in order to greet the related personnel, and Han JooYeon, the coordinator, and the manager went to the waiting room for makeup.

“The eye makeup sure is amazing...”

“Close your eyes.”

“Yes.”

Han JooYeon couldn't open her eyes properly due to the makeup that emphasized the eyes. It seemed there was a lot to do, as the makeup went on for 30 minutes. She did hear that makeup for broadcasting was quite long, and it seemed it was true. Her hair was done with a curling iron, and she didn't know what was there on her face, but two people were drawing sticking and doing various things on her face. Her pretty but plain-looking face transformed into a posh city woman's face like that.

“This is enough, right?”

A long time had passed, and coordinator Yoo SeHee nodded her head in satisfaction after looking at Han JooYeon's face, from which dark circles were gone without a trace.

‘This is... me?’

Han JooYeon widened her eyes when she saw the image of herself in makeup. The figure that was wrapped in steam every day due to practice, was all gone. A pretty woman that anyone would turn their head to at least once, was inside the mirror. The dark circles she was worried about were gone without a trace.

“Aah, so difficult. JooYeon. Your dark circles were no joke. It's rare for a person to have such heavy ones too.”

“Really? I'm sorry. It's that day today...”

“I know, I know. Well, I'm proud of myself so it's alright. Team Leader sure is amazing.”

“Huh? What about the Team Leader?”

Asking why the Team Leader came up, she looked at the coordinator.

“He immediately knew it was your that day today. What would a man know about a woman? Is it intuition? He knew immediately. It looks like he really cares for you lot.”

“Really?”

“Yup. Seeing him so detailed, I kinda understand why The ACE and JooAh always look for him. Did you hear that rumor? Oh, JooYeon is close with JinGyung so you would know already.”

“Yes. JinGyung-unni said she felt very safe when working with Team Leader.”

“I think I’ll also be like that if I was a singer – being fine with whatever I do. Even I think that it will make my heart flutter if I was a singer.”

[Coordinator Jung SeHee](#) sent gazes of admiration while clasping her hands like a girl, despite being in her 30s. Han JooYeon was also surprised at KangYoon’s such care. She slightly understood about what Kim JInGyung had said to her.

Dunno why, but her name suddenly changes from Yoo SeHee to Jung SeHee... ^_(\ツ)_/-

“Are you done?”

At that time, KangYoon entered after having finished giving our greetings. He checked the makeup on Han JooYeon’s face and whether the dark circles still remained or not.

“Please put more powder on this part here.”

“Yes.”

Coordinator Jung SeHee, who was absent mindedly wallowing in admiration for some time, came back to reality with KangYoon’s words.

“Is this fine?”

“Yes, that’s good.”

Coordinator Jung SeHee became more tense when KangYoon required more meticulousness even though the dark circles couldn’t be seen. Han JooYeon was the same. KangYoon’s such actions prevented her from relaxing.

“Let’s go for the dressed rehearsal.”

“Yes.”

Han JooYeon headed to the stage where the recording will take place today, while following KangYoon’s back.

[Paldo](#) Mimic Singing Festival 2 was a programme where they gave prizes to the person who mimicked a famous singer the best. It was a national holiday special [pilot programme](#). People who were picked through preliminaries from all 8 of the provinces of Korea would compete on stage, the finals. Of course, it was still a pilot programme right now, so the staff had to pick from the people who sent self-made videos.

Paldo refers to the eight provinces in Korea

Pilot programmes are basically one-shot programmes

“Paldo – Mimic!! Singing!!”

“Ooooooh—”

Along with the energetic voice of Ji ChangSeok, and the cheering of the 500 people in the audience signalled the start of the recording. Red lights lit up on all the cameras at the same time various devices activated. Behind the stage also became busy as staff moved around.

“Ahhh.... So nervous...”

Han JooYeon, who sat relatively towards the front, tried her best to relax the tension as much as possible with her hands clenched. Although she avoided being first with some negotiations, but she was 5th. As the time passed by, and the first and second came down from the stage, her heart pounded more and more.

‘Ah... What if I make a mistake... If I don’t do well, I will give the company damage, and I won’t be able to debut? Then, I won’t be able to become a singer, then...’

Once she thought of something bad, she kept doing so. Han

JooYeon's expression became visibly worse. Thoughts were always like that, in the end, she ran outside from behind the stage.

‘Huh?’

KangYoon felt that this was something serious and followed Han JooYeon.

“JooYeon.”

“Team Leader...”

Seeing that Han JooYeon's expression had become visibly worse, KangYoon asked softly.

“What is it? Do you have any worries?”

“It's... I..... what if I do bad?”

“Do what bad?”

“Just... everything... up there...”

“You don't have to do well.”

“Sorry?”

However, KangYoon's words were completely unexpected for Han JooYeon, and her eyes widened.

“The moment you go up there, your responsibility is over. Whatever happens, the responsibility is mine from then on.”

“Team Leader...”

“I know what you're worried about. What if I perform badly? What if something bad happens because of that? What if I'm unable to become a singer because of that?”

“.....”

KangYoon's words hit the bullseye. Han JooYeon lowered her head in silence. KangYoon tapped her shoulders. He implied her to cheer up.

“I did say let's go together until the end. Believe in me. Whatever

happens, you just have to do your best up there.”

“.....”

“It’s good that you aren’t crying though. Some people end up crying and their makeup gets messed up and they have to delay their order. There, there, it’s your turn soon so calm down before coming back. Okay?”

“Yes.”

KangYoon didn’t say any more and went back to the stage. Seeing his broad back, Han JooYeon quietly muttered.

“Now I get it; why those unnis want to work with Team Leader so much...”

The belief that KangYoon was behind them no matter what they did.

Having tasted that belief, Han JooYeon acquired more confidence.

Calming down, she went back to the stage.

“This, is a little...”

Lee HyunAh’s expression creased as though the song she sung now was no good. Although she had a cute face, her senior, Min ChanMin, retorted as though he didn’t like her.

“Is that so? Then this...”

Fixing the score, he played the melody again. Remembering each of those sounds, Lee HyunAh sung again. However, it seemed it wasn’t to her liking again as she grumbled.

“I don’t think this is right either...”

Seeing Lee HyunAh like that, Kim HeeJin, who was playing the bass guitar, stepped up.

“HyunAh, just what do you want? You don’t like loose, but you don’t like fast either. That’s no good.”

“I... don’t get that feeling.”

Said Lee HyunAh in a small voice. The other team members got angry, but it was the same.

“Hey, gather up”

In the end, Min ChanMin made the instrumental people gather up. He pointed towards one verse of the score and asked the people.

“HyunAh said this part here is no good because it feels loose. So I changed it to feel a little faster, but now she says that it feels to hurried. What do you think is good?”

Lee HyungSeok, in charge of the electric guitar, answered Min ChanMin’s question. He drew a sharp and gathered everyone’s attention.

“Let’s go with this here, and like this... The chord should be...”

But before he finished drawing a single note, Moon MiYoung interfered.

“But then the chord progression won’t work. I think it will feel like it’s stuck that way?”

Then she touched another chord.

It was like this. All of the members talked about their opinions on one part as they discussed in order for a better piece of music. However, during that, time would fly by quickly.

“I’m... kinda hungry”

With Kim HeeJin’s nagging, the discussion ended.

Everybody had to sigh due to the inconclusive discussion.

The process of making music with everyone wasn’t as easy as it sounded to be.

‘Whoa...!!’

It became her turn and Han JooYeon went up to the stage. Camera with red lights on, numerous audience, and lights... Seeing so many eyes glued on to her, her calmed heart started pounding again.

‘I can do it, I can do it!!’

Han JooYeon resolved herself. However, she didn’t make a signal so no music started. Audience started whispering to each other in the time she took time to calm down, and they, along with the cameras and PDs looked scary to her. She was still 18 years old. It wasn’t easy for her.

At that moment, someone could be seen at the front. It was KangYoon who should have been at the back of the stage.

‘Team Leader?’

He was holding up a giant piece of paper (Ao).

‘It’s fine if you make a mistake? Pffftt...’

But in this situation, he was too kind. Even though he should have held the sharpest gaze among all the people here, his expression was the warmest. Han JooYeon’s pounding heart calmed down.

“Ah, ah. Sorry. Let’s do this again. Would you please cue the music?”

A momentary delay. The audience seemed to have understood and they settled down. The staff received her signal and played the music. It was finally the start.

—You are — a good — person but — you don’t know —

A completely identical voice to the singer Kang MinJoo started enveloping the stage. The audience all rubbed their eyes at the scene where they couldn’t differentiate between the original or just the mimic.

—Would you know — a person in my heart —

Even the presenter, no, all the PDs and the other staff present were confused, they couldn't tell if this was the original or not. Naturally, all voices had to have some differences. However, the girl on that stage was 'perfectly' copying Kang MinJoo's song.

KangYoon settled down after confirming the musical notes and the light. There was no need to say anything about the reactions of the audience. They were all in a mess while asking if she was Kang MinJoo's twin or something.

'Phew...'

Although he did worry because Han JooYeon was very nervous, he sighed in relief as the main stage was done well. Of course, he had a plan B and a plan C if this didn't work, but that would require more time and budget so this was a good thing.

With the cheers of the people, the stage ended. The presenter grabbed her and interviewed her, but her shyness wasn't suited to talking much.

'Entertainment is no good.'

People had their own styles of work. If it was Lee SamSoon or someone else up there, it would have been a different story. KangYoon was a little disappointed.

The stage ended, and KangYoon waited for her in the waiting room.

"Thank you for your wo.... Ah."

Han JooYeon collapsed in place as soon as she came to the waiting room. It seemed her soul had left her legs. The manager immediately supported her to the sofa.

"Good work. It was a nice stage."

"Thank you, Team Leader."

"I didn't do anything. Everything is due to your effort."

KangYoon didn't say much. However, Han JooYeon knew very

well. Only because KangYoon firmly supported her from her back could she digest today's stage without any problems. KangYoon could never give her more confidence.

The recording continued, and it was now the award ceremony.

There was no need to talk about the result of the competition. No one other than Han JooYeon was able to mimic even the breathing. 1st place was Han JooYeon. She couldn't hide her joy after receiving the 2 million won prize (1.8K USD).

"Thank you."

"You mimicked miss Kang MinJoo's song nearly perfectly. Is there a secret to it?"

Presenter Ji ChangSeok asked when Han JooYeon answered.

"A cool outside help?"

"Eeeh?"

All the participants laughed at that answer.

With the prize money and the trophy, Han JooYeon went back to the dorms in high spirits. Of course, the money was shared between her parents, and most of the rest was used in the meat party she had with her dorm mates.

Chapter 53: Girl Group, Start (2)

-You are — a good – person-but — you don't know —

‘This is it!!’

The musical notes coming out of Han JooYeon were constant. The light emitted from the notes combining was brilliant. As ‘To You’ was a song which became a massive hit, the effect was enormous when she sang it in the same way.

-Do you know — the single person in my heart —

KangYoon closed his eyes. Now, it was to the point that it was confusing whether this was being sung by Kang MinJoo or Han JooYeon. The beat, the voice, and even the breathing synchronized so well it was a perfect mimic.

The song ended, and when Han JooYeon came out, KangYoon wordlessly replayed the recorded song.

“I sung this?”

Han JooYeon also doubted whether this was the song she sung or not. Even she was confused to whether this was the AR by Kang MinJoo or her. KangYoon wordlessly patted her shoulders.

“You’ve practiced hard.”

“Thank you.”

Even after KangYoon quietly left, Han JooYeon replayed her own song again and again and enjoyed the excitement.

Meeting.

With the team members, KangYoon was discussing Han JooYeon, who would be the first to be shown to the world.

“Chief Kim, is the [UCC](#) going well?”

(T/N: UCC generally refers to videos in Korea)

When KangYoon asked Chief Kim JungRyul of the Promotion Team, he answered confidently.

“Yes. Han JooYeon did well so a satisfying picture came out.”

“Let’s talk after we see it.”

One of the members of the Promotion Team, Yu ChangSeok, played the project and the video in which Han JooYeon singing in the studio showed up on the screen. She was singing a pop song, which many people knew, and it sounded very smooth. As it was through a video, KangYoon could not see any light. Even so, he could feel that Han JooYeon was passionately singing with all her might, so it wasn’t bad.

“That’s not bad. Please release it the moment she appears on TV.”

“I understand.”

KangYoon kept talking about the budget, the process, etc. The team members asked for KangYoon’s opinion on the parts they were in charge of while they talked about their circumstances, and they voiced their opinions to compromise the situation. KangYoon sometimes accepted, sometimes rejected their opinions and lead the meeting.

“I think this should be enough about Han JooYeon.”

Finishing with that, all of them sighed. This was the moment when the rookies prepared in the company were stepping out for real. Thinking that they would get busy for real once it started, they resolved themselves.

The meeting ended, and KangYoon headed to the 3rd floor where the girls would be busy practicing. Today there was no group practice, so they were practicing by themselves. He immediately went into the room where Han JooYeon was practicing.

“Team Leader...”

“Did I interrupt you?”

“Not at all.”

Han JooYeon was practicing the song that would be broadcasted by herself. She looked surprised after seeing KangYoon but still welcomed him. When KangYoon gave her a bottle of water like always, she politely received it and sat. The time KangYoon comes was resting time.

“The recordings’ next week right?”

“Yes. I sure am nervous.”

“It’s your first time. It’s no wonder that you’re nervous.”

“Are... you going as well, Team Leader?”

“Me? Let’s see...”

“I’m sorry, but if it’s okay with you could you please... go with me that day?”

“Huh?”

KangYoon wondered what was up. But he was given the reason right away.

“JinGyung-unni told me that I can rest assured no matter what happens if I’m with you, Team Leader. I’m more cowardly than you think I am. If it isn’t a bad timing for you, then please.”

“JinGyung did? It seems you two are close.”

“She advised me a lot since I was a trainee. I heard a lot about you, Team Leader, from her. She told me that anything’s possible with you, Team Leader...”

Following JooAh and now Kim JinGyung too... Every time he heard these words, KangYoon honestly felt awkward. From now was emergency status. However, that emergency status was due to Han JooYeon so he could not refuse either.

“Alright.”

“Thank you.”

“Sheesh, really... I need to work too...”

Looking at KangYoon grumbling, she did feel sorry. However, the priority was to calm her nervous heart. She thought that it would be better if KangYoon was there during the nervous first recording.

KangYoon left Han JooYeon’s practice room and headed to Christie An. She was in the middle of being trained about her image management with an external tutor.

“The expression is especially important. Expression. When you smile, the facial muscles...”

“.....”

KangYoon silently entered through the back door and saw that Christie An was lifting the corner of her mouth and the corner of her eyes, which people didn’t use a lot of, with her fingers. The external tutor emphasized again and again that she should use all her facial muscles. After hearing that a pretty face was no more than a decoration, Christie An clenched her teeth and followed the tutor’s words.

“Shall we rest a little?”

“...Yes.”

It was a sitting lecture, but to Christie An, it was a very hard time. She laid deep into her seat when she found KangYoon standing at the back of the practice room and she abruptly jumped up.

“Team Leader!!”

“Lie down. I’m not here to interrupt your rest.”

Even so, Christie An could not lie down. KangYoon was already someone she was awkward with, but after she saw him work with JooAh, she felt even more awkward. KangYoon offered her to sit,

and only then did she sit down.

“Do you know why you’re receiving this kind of training?”

“I don’t.”

Even so, Christie An was very honest. KangYoon like her honest answer and told her the answer immediately.

“You did hear that JooYeon will go on TV soon, right?”

“Yes.”

“Next is your turn.”

“Sorry!?”

Even she, who did not show ripples that much normally, raised her voice very high.

“I... Am I also going on TV?”

“No, you won’t. You do know why JooYeon is going on TV, right?”

“I heard that we will be revealed one by one.”

“Yes. Next up is your turn. However, the method is a little different.”

“Then what...”

“Magazine advertising.”

“Sorry?!”

To think that she would be revealed through advertising, which is known to be done by famous celebrities...

Hearing KangYoon’s incomprehensible words, Christie An’s expression colored in doubt.

“There’s a brand that our company is investing in. We will use you for the advert that that company will be making.”

“Oh, you mean Dearing House? The designs of cosmetics there were quite pretty.”

“Really? I don’t know about it that much. Anyway, you will be doing a cosmetics advert there. That’s why you’re doing this practice now, so you need to be serious about it. You do know of the concept, right?”

“Yes. An expressionless princess becoming lively after using the cosmetics right? I laughed when I saw it.”

“I heard the ad focuses on the ‘Before’ and the ‘After’. So you have to practice smiling ‘well’, get it?”

“Yes!!”

Christie An answered powerfully. In fact, she was kind of expectant on what she would be doing ever since she heard that Han JooYeon was going on TV. However, since she was told to practice her expressions so much, she was disappointed. However, an advert... It didn’t matter whether the scale was big or small. She felt like she was flying.

“Oh, there’s not much guarantee in this advert. So just think of it as going out to eat some meat.”

“...Yes.”

Of course, she did get a little disappointed at KangYoon’s last words.

Autumn was a season where girls’ hearts became all fluffy... yeah right.

The vacation in the summer was practically the last rest. After that, a literal ‘death schedule’ was given to the girls. A Mon-Tue-Wed-Thur-Fri-Fri-Fri schedule, no, a Fri-Fri-Fri-Fri-Fri-Fri-Fri schedule rained upon them like the monsoon season.

“Uaaaaaaaaaaaaa—————!”

A rare group practice. Jung MinAh plopped onto the ground with steam covering her body. Christie An, who would usually use Jung

MinAh's stomach as a pillow, seemed to be too tired to do that today as she was rolling around in the place she was practicing at.

"....Ahahaha... This is somewhere and I'm Jung MinAh. Am I an existence born to practice..."

Jung MinAh was seeing stars as she was going insane from the cruel practice. No matter if she had a steel-like stamina, this kind of insane practice schedule was not easy at all.

"HanYu... Are you alright?"

"...No. How about you, unni?"

"I'm melting..."

Ailee Jung seemed to want to feel the coldness of the floor as she kept rolling around all over the floor. Opposite, Seo HanYu gracefully poured water over a face in an attempt to make the heat fly away.

Lee SamSoon and Han JooYeon next to her had long since closed their eyes.

However, their rest didn't last long. That was because the super guy had appeared in the practice room – KangYoon.

"Hey, hey, wake up."

"Uuuu... Who is it..."

"Team Leader."

"Kehk..."

Lee SamSoon was brilliantly held up by Jung MinAh and was sat down. KangYoon seemed to be used to the nose-piercing smell of sweat, as he handed out bottles of water to the girls as if nothing had affected him. While everyone was quenching their thirst with big gulps, he finally brought out the topic.

"Thanks for your hard work, girls. This is the first time I saw you all together after the vacation, right?"

“.....Yes.”

Their answers contained no strength. Of course, it wasn't that KangYoon expected one from them.

“You did hear that you will be introduced one by one, right?”

“Yes.”

“After that, we will make you known officially after we invite the directors and the related people. We will announce when you will debut, and what concept you will go with.”

“Ah.....”

The girls all felt like fatigue had flown away. KangYoon's words meant that, they will be evaluated before they were introduced to the world.

“Is it like a showcase?”

When Han JooYeon asked, KangYoon shook his head.

“No, this will only be with the related personnel, so the concept is kind of different. We're also looking into broadcasting your debut process, but I'm not too sure about that.”

“W... wait. You will broadcast our debut process?”

Jung MinAh grabbed KangYoon's passing-by words.

“Not confirmed. Why?”

“Then you will record our daily lives and struggles, everything? Including the dorms?”

“I said it's not confirmed. We're looking into it. I will mention it again when it's confirmed. We don't know what may happen. What's important now is that you will go on stage.”

“.....”

Everyone became silent. The first stage with the 6 of them was the one they did at the orphanage. After that, they only practiced to death but had not shown themselves in front of others.

“You never danced with heels on, right?”

“Yes. Not yet.”

Han JooYeon answered as their representative.

“From now, you will practice with heels on, got it?”

“Yes.”

“Also, your title song will come out soon.”

Everyone looked at each other with the expression that said ‘what should have come has finally come’. This was a song only for them. They finally felt that they were becoming singers from trainees. There was the pressure of having to wear heels, but the words about the title song made them rejoice.

KangYoon left after the notice, and the girls were in a mess.

“Hey, hey. He said heels!! Ah, I’ve never worn them before.”

Jung MinAh had nothing to do with heels. She hated inconvenient items. Meanwhile, Seo HanYu looked confident.

“You will get used to them once you wear it a lot. And if we say it, they will give us ones with wide heels so it will be alright.”

“Really? I’m still worried though. I have a hard time balancing since my ankles are thin.”

Seo HanYu consoled Jung MinAh.

However, the most worried person was none other than Lee SamSoon.

“I have the worst affinity with heels though, what do I do? They will definitely give me a pair with high heels.”

Lee SamSoon’s face colored with worry. She had a prior experience of just going barefoot since she just wasn’t compatible with heels.

Of course, it wasn’t just her. All the girls were having similar worries.

KangYoon was busy due to the girls' debut, but he didn't forget to attend the lectures.

Having finished work early, KangYoon headed to the lecture room of S university after lunch.

Since he had arrived a little early, KangYoon could see students having conversations. Couples, men, and women were all joyfully conversing in groups. Listening in, they were mostly conversations about the opposite sex. Men talked about what kind of girls they had met, and the women talked about what kind of men they had met. Such simple, yet joyful stories.

‘Good times.’

He smiled looking at the students. He remembered his own twenties when he was dragged around by his busy life. He had lived without any room for leisure while thinking only about HeeYoon. He momentarily pondered about what kind of life he would have had if he had such times. Of course, these were all useless thoughts.

‘Although I couldn't, I wish for HeeYoon to go to university.’

Looking at the students entering the lecture room, KangYoon thought about HeeYoon. He really wished that HeeYoon would be able to enjoy an ordinary college life, like them. No, he was planning to make it that way.

When the lecture time arrived, professor Choi ChanYang entered with the register like a set clock. Along with that, the seat next to KangYoon became occupied as well.

“Pant pant. I'm not late today. Hello?”

“Oh, hello.”

It was the tardy student from last time, Ha JiYeon. Answering the professor's roll call, she opened her textbook immediately.

“Harmonics are divided into...”

The lecture started and she focused harder than anyone else. Even KangYoon was affected by that. Although they sat at the very back, their passion for learning was great to the point that people near them sneaked glances at them.

“Let’s rest for a moment before we continue.”

Professor Choi ChanYang left for a moment and it became resting time. KangYoon was stretching his arms when Ha JiYeon held out a canned drink to him.

“Oh, thanks.”

“Not at all. This isn’t much. What is your name?”

“I’m Lee KangYoon. What about you?”

“I’m Ha JiYeon. I major business management. What about...”

“I’m an auditor.”

“Ah...”

After that, she seemed like she hesitated with her next words. However, her eyes regained their brilliance and continued speaking.

“That professor is apparently well known for chasing auditors out. Saying that lectures without prices are meaningless or something? This lecture is fun so auditors sit in every year. It’s interesting to see an auditor after 3 weeks.”

“Really?”

“Yes, so please be careful. I knew you didn’t look so easy. Oh, sorry. I said something rude, didn’t I?”

Ha JiYeon was very lively. Thanks to that, KangYoon didn’t have a boring time during the rest. Ha JiYeon seemed to have an interest in fashion as she talked about clothes and school life, which made KangYoon interested, and KangYoon also answered

her every now and then.

The lecture began, and KangYoon started focusing. The world of harmonics which he had seen for the first time was very new to him.

“1st, 4th, 5th, and 8th are called the Perfect intervals, and 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th are called the Major intervals. It’s easier to understand if you think of the piano. C to E is a 3rd, C D E makes a major 3rd. Meanwhile, C D E F makes a perfect 4th. Also...”

KangYoon wrote down all of Professor Choi ChanYang’s notes he wrote on the blackboard. As this was the first lecture, which was basic theory, the contents weren’t that difficult. In some way, this was like maths. Looking next to him, he found Ha JiYeon making a confused expression even while writing down on her notes.

Professor Choi ChanYang’s lecture was not fast. He said everything that was needed and took examples when needed. The students could all focus thanks to the suitable examples, even though it may get a little boring with all the harmonics theory.

“Let’s stop here today.”

“Thanks for your work, sir.”

As soon as the lecture ended, the students left like the receding tides. Today, the students who fought against all the tadpoles went back home with fatigue over their faces.

“Mr. KangYoon. Do you have time this evening?”

KangYoon was also about to leave with the tide when Professor Choi called for him.

“Yes, it is alright...”

“How about we have dinner together?”

KangYoon left with professor Choi ChanYang and headed to the parking area. On his high-class sedan, the two headed to a restaurant near the Han river.

Unlike Professor Choi who looked used to this as he ordered, KangYoon wasn't so much. In the end, he ordered the same thing as him and coughed awkwardly.

"It seems you don't come to places like this so often."

"Yes. Since I prefer Korean food over western food."

"Oh, my. It seems I was a little rude. I apologize."

"Not at all. I don't particularly hate anything."

KangYoon politely said it was okay and started eating the bread that came out as an appetizer. It wasn't that hard to follow the etiquette for eating food at a high-class restaurant when he copied Professor Choi ChanYang.

"I'll buy today, so please eat comfortably."

"This... Then I'll excuse myself."

He must have had his reasons. KangYoon comfortably picked up the knife. Soon, the main dish, the steak, came out along with wine. The faint aroma of wine made him feel like the steak was melting in his mouth.

When they were almost finished eating, Professor Choi ChanYang brought up the main topic.

"Isn't it boring to learn just the basic theory?"

"Not at all. Instead, it feels like I'm climbing up step by step and it's nice."

"That's fortunate. Then, do you have any thoughts on learning faster?"

Of course, if he could learn it faster, then he wouldn't have to worry about wasting time, so it was good. KangYoon asked in confusion.

"Is there a good method?"

"There's a small club that I'm in charge of. I'm giving out my

advice about their songs from time to time. Would you.....”

“A small club, you say..... What kind of club is it?”

“It’s a club that composes songs and plays them. A band, to say. Around 5 people gather to talk about music while getting closer to each other.”

If it was a small club about composing, then KangYoon felt like he wouldn’t receive any pressure. He didn’t think that he would be able to go there often, but he did feel like it would be a good opportunity to learn their free ways of thinking while discussing with them and learn music theory as well.

“I understand.”

When KangYoon accepted, Professor Choi ChanYang replied with his uniquely soft smile.

“What do I do...”

Han JooYeon kept sighing in front of the front door. Thanks to not being able to sleep the past night, there were dark circles under her eyes. She counted sheep all night, and tried all sorts of methods to sleep, but in the end, she couldn’t even sleep for 2 hours. First time on the TV came with a lot of nervousness.

“Unni, your eyes are no joke...”

“It’s so bad, right?”

“Do you think you can cover that up with makeup? It really looks serious...”

Seo HanYu’s expression colored in worry as she was about to leave in her school uniform to go to school.

“It wasn’t this bad, but last night, I couldn’t sleep, and even ‘that’ arrived...”

“Eek? No way... ‘that’?”

She was kicked while down.

The demon of 'that day' that comes once a month had assaulted her.

"What will you do? Why does it have to be today of all days... Doesn't your stomach hurt?"

"Not that much. Before that, can you lend me 'that'? I ran out. I'll pay you back later."

"Yes. wait a minute."

Han JooYeon borrowed the female products from Seo HanYu, before hurrying to set out. If she had to go to the company to meet KangYoon and go out for recording later, then time was running out.

Although she would also undergo makeup at the TV station, she put on heavy makeup before going out. She didn't want to be the center of attention on the way.

At the company, KangYoon had already finished preparing and was waiting for her.

"Eh?"

However, KangYoon's expression turned strange as soon as he saw Han JooYeon's face.

"Did you not have enough sleep yesterday?"

"...Yes."

"The bags under your eyes are huge. It wasn't like this normally, was it?"

"....."

Pimples, dark circles, freckles and such face-related talks were a taboo for women.

However, KangYoon was very direct.

To him, a celebrity's face was his work.

Han JooYeon panicked since this the first time it happened, but what was important now was not that.

“I couldn’t sleep because I was too nervous. Will I... be alright?”

“It can’t be helped. Get on first.”

Han JooYeon got on the car, and KangYoon paid his attention to what she brought. Normally, she didn’t even carry around even a small pouch containing makeup. However, she was carrying one today.

‘Hmm.... Is it that day?’

He hadn’t worked as a manager for 7 years for nothing. There were some women whose dark circles were especially worse on that certain day. Han JooYeon was also like that. Moreover, she looked tense as well, which made KangYoon be sure about it.

KangYoon quietly called for coordinator Yoo SeHee who was checking over the stuff.

“Team Leader, you called?”

“You know how to do her makeup, right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I think it’s that day for her today, so please mind her a little more. The day is quite unfortunate.”

“I understand. Team Leader, how did you know that?”

“Well... from experience. Well, then. Please take care of her.”

“Yes, Team Leader.”

KangYoon did the final check, and they departed for the TV station.

After arriving, KangYoon left first in order to greet the related personnel, and Han JooYeon, the coordinator, and the manager went to the waiting room for makeup.

“The eye makeup sure is amazing...”

“Close your eyes.”

“Yes.”

Han JooYeon couldn't open her eyes properly due to the makeup that emphasized the eyes. It seemed there was a lot to do, as the makeup went on for 30 minutes. She did hear that makeup for broadcasting was quite long, and it seemed it was true. Her hair was done with a curling iron, and she didn't know what was there on her face, but two people were drawing sticking and doing various things on her face. Her pretty but plain looking face transformed into a city woman's face like that.

“This is enough, right?”

A long time had passed, and coordinator Yoo SeHee nodded her head in satisfaction after looking at Han JooYeon's face, from which dark circles were gone without a trace.

‘This is... me?’

Han JooYeon widened her eyes when she saw the image of herself in makeup. The figure that was wrapped in steam every day due to practice, was all gone. A pretty woman that anyone would turn their head to at least once, was inside the mirror. The dark circles she was worried about were gone without a trace.

“Aah, so difficult. JooYeon. Your dark circles were no joke. It's rare for a person to have such heavy ones too.”

“Really? I'm sorry. It's that day today...”

“I know, I know. Well, I'm proud of myself so it's alright. Team Leader sure is amazing.”

“Huh? What about the Team Leader?”

Asking why the Team Leader came up, she looked at the coordinator.

“He immediately knew it was your that day today. What would a man know about a woman? Is it intuition? He knew immediately.

It looks like he really cares for you lot.”

“Really?”

“Yup. Seeing him so detailed, I kinda understand why The ACE and JooAh always look for him. Did you hear that rumor? Oh, JooYeon is close with JinGyung so you would know already.”

“Yes. JinGyung-unni said she felt very safe when working with Team Leader.”

“I think I’ll also be like that if I was a singer – being fine with whatever I do. Even I think that it will make my heart flutter if I was a singer.”

Coordinator [Jung SeHee](#) sent gazes of admiration while clasping her hands like a girl, despite being in her 30s. Han JooYeon was also surprised at KangYoon’s such care. She slightly understood about what Kim JInGyung had said to her.

[1. Dunno why, but her name suddenly changes from Yoo SeHee to Jung SeHee... ^_(\ツ)_/^-]

“Are you done?”

At that time, KangYoon entered after having finished giving our greetings. He checked the makeup on Han JooYeon’s face and whether the dark circles still remained or not.

“Please put more powder on this part here.”

“Yes.”

Coordinator Jung SeHee, who was absent-minded in admiration for some time, came back to reality with KangYoon’s words.

“Is this fine?”

“Yes, that’s good.”

Coordinator Jung SeHee became tenser when KangYoon required more meticulousness even though the dark circles couldn’t be seen. Han JooYeon was the same. KangYoon’s such actions

prevented her from relaxing.

“Let’s go for the dressed rehearsal.”

“Yes.”

Han JooYeon headed to the stage where the recording will take place today while following KangYoon’s back.

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. .

[Paldo](#) Mimic Singing Festival was a programme where they gave prizes to the person who mimicked a famous singer the best. It was a national holiday special [pilot programme](#). People who were picked through preliminaries from all 8 of the provinces of Korea would compete on stage, the finals. Of course, it was still a pilot programme right now, so the staff had to pick from the people who sent self-made videos.

[2. T/N: Paldo refers to the eight provinces in Korea]

[3. T/N: Pilot programmes are basically one-shot programmes.]

“Paldo – Mimic!! Singing!!”

“Ooooooh—”

Along with the energetic voice of Ji ChangSeok, and the cheering of the 500 people in the audience signaled the start of the recording. Red lights lit up on all the cameras at the same time various devices activated. Behind the stage also became busy as staff moved around.

“Ahhh.... So nervous...”

Han JooYeon, who sat relatively towards the front, tried her best to relax the tension as much as possible with her hands clenched. Although she avoided being first with some negotiations, she was still 5th in line. As the time passed by, and the first and second

came down from the stage, her heart pounded more and more.

‘Ah... What if I make a mistake... If I don’t do well, I will give the company damage, and I won’t be able to debut? Then, I won’t be able to become a singer, then...’

Once she thought of something bad, she kept doing so. Han JooYeon’s expression became visibly worse. Thoughts were always like that, in the end, she ran outside from behind the stage.

‘Huh?’

KangYoon felt that this was something serious and followed Han JooYeon.

“JooYeon.”

“Team Leader...”

Seeing that Han JooYeon’s expression had become visibly worse, KangYoon asked softly.

“What is it? Do you have any worries?”

“It’s... I..... what if I do bad?”

“Do what bad?”

“Just... everything... up there...”

“You don’t have to do well.”

“Sorry?”

However, KangYoon’s words were completely unexpected for Han JooYeon, and her eyes widened.

“The moment you go up there, your responsibility is over. Whatever happens, the responsibility is mine from then on.”

“Team Leader...”

“I know what you’re worried about. What if I do bad? What if it something bad happens because of that? What if I’m unable to become a singer because of that?”

“.....”

KangYoon’s words hit the bullseye. Han JooYeon lowered her head in silence. KangYoon tapped her shoulders. He implied her to cheer up.

“I did say let’s go together until the end. Believe in me. Whatever happens, you just have to do your best up there.”

“.....”

“It’s good that you aren’t crying, though. Some people end up crying and their makeup becomes messed up and they have to delay their order. There, there. It’s your turn soon so calm down before coming back. Okay?”

“Yes.”

KangYoon didn’t say any more and went back to the stage. Seeing his broad back, Han JooYeon quietly muttered.

“Now I get it; why those unnis want to work with Team Leader so much...”

The belief that KangYoon was behind them no matter what they did.

Having tasted that belief, Han JooYeon acquired more confidence.

Calming down, she went back to the stage.

“This is a little...”

Lee HyunAh’s expression creased as though the song she sung now was no good. Although she had a cute face, her senior, Min ChanMin, retorted as though he didn’t like her.

“Is that so? Then this...”

Fixing the score, he played the melody again. Remembering each of those sounds, Lee HyunAh sang again. However, it seemed it

wasn't to her liking again as she grumbled.

"I don't think this is right either..."

Seeing Lee HyunAh like that, Kim HeeJin, who was playing the bass guitar, stepped up.

"HyunAh, just what do you want? You don't like loose, but you don't like fast either. That's no good."

"I... don't get that feeling."

Said Lee HyunAh in a small voice. The other team members got angry, but it was the same.

"Hey, gather up"

In the end, Min ChanMin made the instrumental people gather up. He pointed towards one verse of the score and asked the people.

"HyunAh said this part here is no good because it feels loose. So I changed it to feel a little faster, but now she says that it feels too hurried. What do you think is good?"

Lee HyungSeok, in charge of the electric guitar, answered Min ChanMin's question. He drew a sharp and gathered everyone's attention.

"Let's go with this here, and like this... The chord should be..."

But before he finished drawing a single note, Moon MiYoung interfered.

"But then the chord progression won't work. I think it will feel like it's stuck that way?"

Then she touched another chord.

It was like this. All of the members talked about their opinions on one part as they discussed in order for a better piece of music. However, during that, time would fly by quickly.

"I'm... kinda hungry"

With Kim HeeJin's nagging, the discussion ended.

Everybody had to sigh due to the unconcluded discussion.

The process of making music with everyone wasn't as easy as it sounded to be.

‘Whoa...!!’

It became her turn and Han JooYeon went up to the stage. Camera with red lights on, numerous audience, and lights... Seeing so many eyes glued onto her, her calmed heart started pounding again.

‘I can do it, I can do it!!’

Han JooYeon resolved herself. However, she didn't make a signal so no music started. The audience started whispering in the time she took time to calm down, and they, along with the cameras and PDs looked scary to her. She was still 18 years old. It wasn't easy for her.

At that moment, someone could be seen at the front. It was KangYoon who should have been at the back of the stage.

‘Team Leader?’

He was holding up a giant piece of paper (Ao).

‘It's fine if you make a mistake? Pffftt...’

But in this situation, he was too kind. Even though he should have had the sharpest gaze of all the people here, instead, he was the warmest. Han JooYeon's pounding heart calmed down.

“Ah, ah. Sorry. Let's do this again. Would you please cue the music?”

A momentary delay. The audience seemed to have understood and they settled down. The staff received her signal and played the music. It was finally the start.

You are — a good – person-but — you don't know —

A completely identical voice to the singer Kang MinJoo started enveloping the stage. The audience all rubbed their eyes at the scene where they couldn't differentiate between the original or just the mimic.

Would you know — a person in my heart —

Even the presenter, no, all the PDs and the other staff there were confused whether if this was the original or not. Originally, all voices had to have some differences. However, the girl on that stage was 'perfectly' copying Kang MinJoo's song.

KangYoon settled down after seeing the musical notes and the light. There was no need to say anything about the reactions of the audience. They were all in a mess while asking if she was Kang MinJoo's twin or something.

'Phew...'

Although he did worry because Han JooYeon was very nervous, he sighed in relief as the main stage was done well. Of course, he had a plan B and a plan C if this didn't work, but that would require more time and budget so this was a good thing.

With the cheers of the people, the stage ended. The presenter grabbed her and interviewed her, but her shyness wasn't suited to talking much.

'Entertainment is no good.'

People had their own styles of work. If it was Lee SamSoon or someone else up there, it would have been a different story. KangYoon was a little disappointed.

The stage ended, and KangYoon waited for her in the waiting room.

"Thank you for your wo.... Ah."

Han JooYeon collapsed in place as soon as she came to the

waiting room. It seemed her soul had left her legs. The manager immediately supported her to the sofa.

“Good work. It was a nice stage.”

“Thank you, Team Leader.”

“I didn’t do anything. Everything is due to your effort.”

KangYoon didn’t say much. However, Han JooYeon knew very well. Only because KangYoon firmly supported her from her back could she digest today’s stage without any problems. KangYoon could never give her more confidence.

The recording continued, and it was now the award ceremony.

There was no need to talk about the result of the competition. No one other than Han JooYeon was able to mimic even the breathing. 1st place was Han JooYeon. She couldn’t hide her joy after receiving the 2 million won prize (1.8K USD).

“Thank you.”

“You mimicked miss Kang MinJoo’s song nearly perfectly. Is there a secret to it?”

Presenter Ji ChangSeok asked when Han JooYeon answered.

“A cool outside help?”

“Eehh?”

All the participants laughed at that answer.

With the prize money and the trophy, Han JooYeon went back to the dorms in high spirits. Of course, the money was shared between her parents, and most of the rest was used in the meat party she had with her dorm mates.

Chapter 54: Causing An Incident At A Music Circle (1)

Sunday after the recording.

KangYoon went to Hallyeo Arts University as he had promised with Professor Choi ChanYang.

“Is it here....”

As one of the biggest arts university, its scale was quite considerable. Seeing many students going to college to practice for other activities, KangYoon thought that they were amazing. He immediately went to the student council building where the practice room was.

“Welcome.”

KangYoon could meet Professor Choi ChanYang in front of the student council building. The two immediately went to the underground practice room.

Entering the practice room, 5 people comprised of both genders were practicing with microphones and instruments.

‘Black....’

That was the first thing that came into his view. The blue musical notes that everyone created were making a sticky black light. The song they were playing definitely wasn’t some kind of strange music. It was a sort of ballad, but KangYoon’s expression creased as far as it could from the get-go.

‘Ugh.....’

Influenced by the black light, KangYoon felt as if his strength was draining. It was as if he was being pulled into a swamp. It was as though their playing was gnawing his life force away. That was how KangYoon felt.

‘This isn’t good. I can’t bear to listen.’

KangYoon couldn’t endure it and exited the room, then Professor Choi ChanYang followed him out in surprise.

“What is it? Do you feel unwell?”

“Ah.... No, it’s nothing. I suddenly feel nauseous....”

He could never say that it was because of some black light. The black song he was met with in a defenseless state did indeed drop his physical conditions down. Professor Choi ChanYang was surprised and brought him a cup of water and made him rest a little. KangYoon recovered.

‘What the hell....’

Even KangYoon himself was surprised while he was resting on the chair prepared in the corridor. He never knew that the black light could negatively affect him so much. His body was still reacting to it. It was as if his life force was being scooped away. It was a feeling he never wanted to experience again.

Having barely collected himself, KangYoon entered the studio again with Professor Choi ChanYang. When they entered, the five had already finished playing and were discussing the score.

“Everyone, can I have your attention for a moment?”

When Professor Choi ChanYang spoke out to them, everyone looked back. He introduced KangYoon to everyone. Of course, as they had discussed this beforehand, they left out the story about how he was from MG Entertainment. He only told them that KangYoon worked in the same industry.

KangYoon and Professor Choi ChanYang started watching the students discussing.

“Like I said, we need a minor-like feel here.”

“No, that’s wrong. We need to liven it up a little more here. If we make it minor....”

KangYoon could immediately realize why the music had a black color.

‘Too many captains drove the ship into a mountain.’

Putting all sorts of chords and melodies in would have resulted from a gray to black color. KangYoon was just a collateral damage in that experiment.

‘But it looks fun.’

KangYoon watched the process as they created music together with interest. Though, he still couldn’t understand half of what they were saying with diminished chords and augmented chords. However, it did look really interesting to see the process of creating music. It had a different charm to the composition of pros.

However, that didn’t last long.

‘Urgh.... That damn black....’

KangYoon felt shivers all over his body when a music made with a one whole hour of discussion turned black. It was not a good feeling at all. Professor Choi ChanYang also shook his head in dissatisfaction.

After playing it two or three more times, they came to the conclusion that this was no good and started discussing again. This time, Professor Choi chimed in a few times as well.

“Why don’t we remove the sharp here?”

“Oh, really?”

They erased a sharp on the score after hearing Professor Choi’s words and tried other keys. The other people also commented as well. Kim HeeJin played the melody with a classical guitar. They decided on a melody that everyone was satisfied with.

However, everyone tilted their heads when the voice was inputted as well.

“This doesn’t sound right. I guess we don’t have any luck today.”

Moon MiYoung grumbled while standing up from the drums. After that, Kim HeeJin, who was the bass, also commented.

“You’re right. Today’s weird.”

On one side, KangYoon felt like he was going to die.

‘Ugh.... I’m drained of any strength.’

With no one knowing, the black light from the music was draining KangYoon’s energy.

.
. .

The composition-jam session ended, and everyone headed towards a nearby bar. Since it was Sunday and the bar was near the university, there weren’t many people. Thanks to that, KangYoon and the others could enjoy a quiet drinking time.

“So, how was today, Mr. KangYoon?”

When the drinking time got ripe, Professor Choi ChanYang asked KangYoon with a slightly reddened face.

“It was good. Good times is what came to my mind.”

“Hahahaha.”

Everyone burst out laughing.

“Oppa, was our song okay?”

Moon MiYoung realized that KangYoon was avoiding the answer so asked directly. KangYoon was put into an awkward spot.

“Hmm.... It was good.”

“Really? Hm. I think your expression is saying the opposite.”

“Hey, MiYoung. What’s up with you? You’re putting him in a tight spot.”

Moon MiYoung had a slightly mischievous side to her. When Kim HeeJin scolded her, the friends started quarreling. KangYoon laughed while looking at them. It was good to look at youngsters in their prime.

Professor Choi ChanYang wasn't that talkative in that get-together. He left the students to discuss music on their own, and only threw one or two lines when he needed to. He was also the motivation that made the students not scatter and stay together.

‘Mm?’

KangYoon discovered a person who distanced herself when the topic turned into a discussion about the music. It was Lee HyunAh, the vocalist. Everyone was on hot wheels about the music, but only she looked far from interested.

‘Does she have no interest in the band?’

She didn't speak much about the score even in the practice room. Despite that, she really sang well. She had a good voice, but the black light made KangYoon confused.

A little bit of time passed and the drinking time ended. Everyone had reddened faces and men and women went their separate ways. From the number of bottles on the table, all of them had binged on the alcohol.

Of course, KangYoon and Professor Choi didn't.

“These kids.... I'm somewhat embarrassed.”

“Not at all. It was very fun today.”

KangYoon separated from Professor Choi and headed to the station to take the subway home.

But someone tagged alone.

“Excuse me, oppa.”

“Mm? Your name was....”

“Lee HyunAh.”

Lee HyunAh grumbled at him for not remembering someone he had met today. KangYoon only laughed it over. The two people were going the same way so they went together.

“I know who you are.”

“You know me? Did we meet somewhere before?”

“TheACE.”

“Huh?”

Lee HyunAh showed him a Twisser screen. KangYoon could be seen controlling the mixer in TheACE’s street performance.

“Ah.... There were such things floating around.”

“I am a fan of TheAce. I even know their manager’s name.... but just one person, you, I don’t have any information on. So it was a guy named Lee KangYoon.”

She seemed to have come to a realization. Lee KangYoon was practically a classified existence even within the company. The fans would find out even the manager’s name, but it was hard to find any info on him.

“The internet sure is scary. So, are you going to tweet about me?”

“What good is it if it’s just you? Weren’t you TheACE’s manager?”

She had a misunderstanding. She basically implied “What did you do with TheACE?”.

“The manager changed.”

“Aah, TheACE sure has it hard nowadays. It must be hard for them. I heard they can’t even get proper sleep nowadays.”

“Probably.”

“It sounds like you’re talking about someone you don’t know.... Are all managers like this?”

“Hahaha, you’re the real deal, eh?”

The conversation with Lee HyunAh was fun. She was full of vitality, and she had a cute side to her as well. Thanks to that, KangYoon’s way home wasn’t so boring.

However, there was a reason she tagged along with KangYoon.

“Oppa, how was our song?”

“It was good, why?”

“Lies. I know already.”

What did she know? KangYoon wondered.

“Your expression said it wasn’t. I saw you creasing your face when we sang.”

“.....”

“Was it... that bad?”

He wondered why they met eyes during practice, and it seemed to be her watching him. KangYoon deeply sighed and spoke honestly.

“There are too many captains. I think you’re trying to put too many things into one song.”

“Do you think so too?”

“I’m no musician so I wouldn’t know for sure. But yeah.... A little.”

KangYoon didn’t delve far into it. He didn’t want to tick off their pride after all. However, she understood his words and nodded her head.

“You’re completely right. With everyone being in the Composition department.... Phew, nowadays, I think the first version of the song might have been better.”

“But I still think it’s fun. Perhaps you will make a masterpiece.”

“I don’t think it’s fun though.”

Lee HyunAh shook her head.

“There are no emotions, and every day is a continuation of messed up discussions about the music.... I don’t feel any fun in this. I might end up quitting like this.”

“Hm....”

“Can I really continue doing this?”

KangYoon was put in a tight spot instead. How did he have to answer this? How could she talk about such a serious thing with a person she just met? KangYoon just spoke honestly.

“What good would come out of asking someone you just met today?”

“But even so.... I thought you might have felt something today.”

In KangYoon’s view, Lee HyunAh was like a little child that wanted to grab anyone nearby and speak to them about everything. A child looking for answers, maybe? But KangYoon did feel that he had to be serious about this and avoided answering hastily.

“Feel something, eh? Now’s the process of making the song itself, isn’t it? There’s no way it’s so easy to do that.”

“It’s a problem because we’re like this every day. Day after day.... Haa, that’s not it. Sorry. I keep talking about useless things.”

Seeing KangYoon not reacting to her so easily, Lee HyunAh switched topic, KangYoon felt that she was just like the others around her age and went over to the topic as well. Talking about the latest celebrities, they could discuss naturally.

‘I still wish he gave me some answers though....’

Even so, Lee HyunAh seemed to be disappointed in KangYoon and could not hide it.

The busiest team in MG Entertainment nowadays was undoubtedly the PR team.

With Min JinSeo on the rise, the PR team became busy for an aggressive marketing style, and with TheACE using SNS as marketing, even more, was added to the workload. Following that....

“Aah.... It’s Han JooYeon this time!!”

Vice-chief Goo DoMin of the PR team had the urge to just throw all the documents on his desk into the sky. Work seemed to be increasing the more he did them. With the five-day week policy being implemented, the conception that Saturdays and Sundays were holidays were being spread around, but that was a distant story for the PR team.

“Vice-chief Goo, did Han JooYeon’s videos all get onto the search engines?”

“Yes, we’ll get the articles published soon too!!”

Vice-chief Goo was even fed up with Chief Ji ManHoon and went to the new employee Lee HeeSeon. She was a beauty with a cat-face, but that wasn’t of any concern right now.

“Hey!! What’s this!! This photo is the wrong one!!”

“Sorry? Wait for a sec.... Ehh?”

Employee Lee HeeSeon widened her eyes after seeing Han JooYeon’s photo being switched out with Ailee Jung’s.

“Phew.... Are you crazy? If team leader finds out, we’ll all be screwed over.”

“I’m so sorry!!”

The things he would have kindly looked over normally wasn’t so easily looked over right now due to his temper. That was how tense the atmosphere was in the PR team.

When the PR team was focusing on work without being able to go home, KangYoon arrived.

“Team leader!”

Seeing KangYoon, Chief Ji ManHoon tried to tie his top button on the shirt and the tie, but KangYoon held him back.

“It’s fine. Everyone’s working hard.”

KangYoon held out some food. It was a special-made sushi for them who had remained even after all the other teams went home.

“Thank you, team leader!”

Employee Lee HeeSeon was hungry all this time and tried to extend her hand to the vinyl bag before being stopped by Vice-chief Goo’s glare. However, KangYoon just laughed.

“Please enjoy your meals. Thanks to everyone’s hard work, Han JooYeon’s being advertised well. The official compensation would be done after the girl group debuts as a whole, but I’ll tell the higher-ups about the PR team especially.”

“Hooray to the team leader!”

Naturally, the PR team went up in cheers. Last time, they had also been rewarded with a luxurious overseas trip thanks to TheACE. Their work was hard, but the rewards were compelling so they were really motivated.

“Then please enjoy your meals.”

KangYoon immediately headed to his office after that. Seeing his back, Lee HeeSeon’s eyes were filled with hearts.

“Team leader is so cool.... Does he have a lover; I wonder....”

Then, Vice-chief Goo DoMin pulled her out of her delusions.

“Hey hey. Stop dreaming. He’s the guy that doesn’t even glance at Min JinSeo or JooAh when they work together.”

“Vice-chief, celebrities are like dolls though. They’re distant

from us too....”

She was right. They were employees of the same company, but there definitely was some distance between them.

“Pff, do you think the team leader is the same as us?”

“That’s....”

“That’s why you have all sorts of weird photos. You put in JinSeo’s photo instead of JooAh’s last time, didn’t you?”

“Why does that come up now....”

The other employees enjoyed their midnight meals while listening to the banter between the grumbling higher-up and the thick-nerved employee

“Fuaaaah.....”

Maths class.

Jung MinAh was busy supplementing her fatigue from practice. This was the most boring class for her. Especially with maths, functions, formulae or ‘Ekks’ whatever made her eyelids really heavy.

Now was no different.

“That why the value of X is.... Ah, again....”

Her friend next to her tried to wake her up but the maths teacher shook his head. She was a student he had already given up on. With her sleeping like an ill chicken throughout all of his classes, she was like an archenemy to him. In fact, he didn’t even remember Jung MinAh’s face that well.

“She’s sleeping again.”

Christie An looked at her as if she was looking at a pathetic person. Unlike English, her eyes were glistening and the pen in her hand was gripped tightly. The maths teacher seemed to receive

energy from looking at her and continued on with the class.

“Snoooooore....”

“.....”

However, Jung MinAh eventually ended up snoring as well which made the math’s teachers patience snap.

“Hey!! Jung MinAh!!”

“.....”

In the end, Christie An shook her up.

“Ah.... Why....?”

Christie An pointed towards the blackboard while looking at Jung MinAh who couldn’t hide her exhausted eyes. Then, Jung MinAh became awkward and scratched her head.

“Get out!”

In the end, Jung MinAh was punished by standing in the corridor.

“Uu....”

Jung MinAh yawned even in the corridor. This sleepiness was uncontrollable. With practice being so harsh nowadays, no amount of sleep made her relieved. Thanks to that, her house gave her some oriental medicine for her stamina, but stamina wasn’t something that recovered so easily.

“Aah.... That ahjussi, he drives us too hard....”

“I what.”

“Just saying.... The practice is so.... Whoa?!”

She replied subconsciously, but the real deal appeared in front of her; it was KangYoon.

“A.... Ahjussi! How.... How are you....”

“What are you doing in the corridor?”

“Sorry? Oh.... Uh.... I....”

“You got kicked out because you dozed off. Good for you.”

“.....”

KangYoon’s words were the truth so Jung MinAh couldn’t say anything. Rather than that, she was bright red in embarrassment. Being punished in the corridor with no one there left an unspeakable shame on her.

“I won’t say you need to do your best in your studies, but at least don’t get punished. sigh.”

“Uu....”

KangYoon felt absurd while looking at Jung MinAh. He came to the school himself in order to ask for permission for their leave since they would get busier from now on. But this was what he was met with....

Jung MinAh also couldn’t lift her head up either. She tried to look good in front of KangYoon at all times, but this blow today was rather large.

“I’m sorry for the kids....”

“Not at all. It’s around the time they do such things.”

The vice-principal behind KangYoon made a benevolent laugh while Jung MinAh was embarrassed to death. KangYoon also acted as if he was calm, but he was embarrassed on the inside.

‘You, I’ll see to you later.’

‘.....’

Whispered KangYoon and disappeared somewhere with the vice-principal.

Christie An, who was looking through the window, bashed her head on the desk in order to stifle her laugh.

A day of rest after a hard week.

KangYoon went to Hallyeo Arts university in order to watch the band practice. Heading to the underground floor of the student council building, there was a door with the letters 'Recovery's Practice room'.

"Hello?"

"Hello, how have you been professor."

He entered the door and the students and Professor Choi all greeted him. When KangYoon sat next to Professor Choi, everyone started practicing again.

"Day after day – time after time – what I'm looking for –"

Fancy electric guitar sounds resounded the studio along with Lee HyunAh's singing. With the drums and bass added in as well as the synthesizer, a heavy yet fun melody started being created.

However, KangYoon's energy was being drained instead.

'It's the same as always....'

KangYoon was directly exposed to the black light. Singing, drum, bass, synth, guitar – all the musical notes they individually created were definitely good. However, it was a black light that came out when they all mixed together. KangYoon forcefully endured it and thought about where the problem lay. He analyzed the score with Professor Choi and he also had his own analysis on the reason why it became like that.

A round of practice ended and the band seemed to be full of dissatisfaction. The first one to speak was the leader Min ChanMin.

"Isn't the intro chord strange in the 3rd bar?"

Moon MiYoung replied to that.

"Do you think so too? I also thought that."

“Should we try changing it?”

Everyone gathered and started changing the score. Having changed one part, they had to fix all the rest to fit that as well, and it was a continuation of edits. KangYoon watched their work with interest. Although he couldn't understand the majority of what they were saying right now, with Professor Choi's help, he could start understanding slightly.

However, Lee HyunAh was silent, unlike the others who were actively participating.

‘She did say she didn't like it, though, she sure is silent.’

KangYoon was concerned about her perhaps because the things they talked about when they went back home together. She definitely did look like she had something to say, but she seemed to be suppressing it. Everyone didn't seem to notice and ignored her and drew their own score.

Eventually, they finished working and started playing the song.

“Looking for my dream – I'm off – maybe – the endless road – leaving to my youth—“

Lee HyunAh's voice was a voice that had a depth to it. It was quite a stark contrast to her cute figure. KangYoon liked her voice. Though...

‘Uu....’

It was hard to adapt to the black light. There definitely seemed to be a problem with the song as it kept releasing black light. However, unlike last time, KangYoon didn't leave his seat or anything.

‘Professor.’

‘Yes?’

‘Today's score... can I have a copy?’

Professor Choi accepted KangYoon's request. KangYoon didn't

forget to relieve him by saying that this will not be used by him in any way.

Like that, the band practice continued for a full day before they went to the bar again.

Perhaps due to the tiring practice, everyone was filled with vitality. With a drink in the mix, everyone started discussing their own opinions. If this was about the song before, this was about their personal stories.

However, Lee HyunAh still didn't talk a lot. Unlike the time she actively spoke with KangYoon, she showed a very different side. The unnis, Kim HeeJin, and Moon MiYoung tried to drag her back to the conversation, but she always slipped out after a few moment and stayed by herself. Other than talking sometimes to Professor Choi, she didn't seem that interested in the band.

The gathering ended, and it was time to go home.

KangYoon hurriedly headed to the station since he had to go to work the next day.

“Let's go together.”

Since Lee HyunAh was going the same way, she tagged along. KangYoon had no reason to refuse so they went together.

They boarded the subway and coincidentally the two could sit side by side.

“I don't think you're focused during practice.”

“It's not interesting.”

“Why are you coming then to the meeting?”

“It's because of the professor. There's a lot to learn from him.”

KangYoon immediately understood. Professor Choi always filled in the gaps whenever it was necessary. The band too received his help when they were stuck.

“Aah, but I’m worried because it’s no fun. Their song isn’t that good either....”

“Really?”

“Do you agree?”

KangYoon was slightly pricked. However, Lee HyunAh seemed to be quick-witted and realized that.

“Rather than it’s not good.... It’s not complete.”

“Nah, it’s fine. I sang it and I still didn’t like it. You can be honest here. Though, I might get stoned if I got heard by others.”

Lee HyunAh was very merciless with her own band. KangYoon was curious and looked at her.

“They’re always discussing. Even if we do change, we keep repeating the same mistakes. What good is that? The current piece is just a mixture of all sorts of things. They have all fell into the habit of doing the same things again and again.”

“What do you mean?”

“The song I sang today, for example, can be....”

She repeatedly sang the same phrase to give an example. Like how a note had to become longer and had to become higher, like how the feeling went as such, etc. – she explained to KangYoon. However, she also added at the end that it won’t work unless the entire thing changed.

“So you mean the mood of the song needs to change entirely?”

“Yes. As it is now, it’s nothing more than remodeling an old, unstable house.”

KangYoon agreed with her since he was rendered powerless by the black light all this time. However, he also didn’t like how she was complaining about everything.

“Then how about we do this?”

“Do what?”

“The score of the piece we did today, you have it, right?”

“Yes.”

“You’ll arrange the song and show it to everyone.”

Lee HyunAh strongly shook her head at KangYoon’s words.

“Nah, I want to do it too. But I’m only in the first year. If I say anything to those unnis and oppas, I’ll get scolded for revolting.”

“How can such a thing happen?”

“This place..... is like that. There’s a strong hierarchy too....”

KangYoon was rendered speechless. He didn’t know about college culture that much but still did think that this was no good. Although South Korea was known for its well hierarchized senior-junior relationship, he didn’t know that there was still the same thing today.

“Then what about this?”

“How?”

“Don’t you think you still need to try? You’re in the composition department as well. Rather than just complaining about the seniors, shouldn’t you try at least first?”

“.....”

“Well, if you say no, that’s that.”

KangYoon was about to skip it over when she replied.

“Fine. Can I give I photograph it and just give it to you via e-mail?”

“Yep. The earlier the better.”

KangYoon gave her his e-mail address through a text message

...Never did he realize his actions today will bring about a huge incident.

Chapter 55: Causing An Incident At A Music Circle (2)

Chairman Won JinMoon laughed after receiving the documents from KangYoon.

“As always, you don’t disappoint me.”

The report about Han JooYeon made Chairman Won JinMoon satisfied. He immediately signed saying he didn’t need to read anymore.

“Thank you.”

“Announcing the members individually.... Although it will take a lot of work, it will definitely help in their individual activities as well as procuring fans and advertising. The start was a good one as well. I didn’t know Han JooYeon could be so similar to that Kang MinJoo.”

“It’s thanks to her hard practice.”

“No, not at all. The one who made her like that is even more amazing. Anyone can ‘imitate’ but it’s not easy to become ‘completely’ the same. Even Kang MinJoo herself might be confused if she listens to it. Thanks for your hard work. I’ll listen to the details during the directors’ meeting... but that’s a pity. You don’t show up in trivial directors’ meetings.”

“Hahaha.”

KangYoon could only laugh while thinking about the directors’ meeting that he no longer frequented.

“Who’s next? Christie An?”

“Yes.”

“Then please do your best this time too. Even though DearingHouse is a company we invested in, we are getting a few

glares because we sent a trainee this time.”

“Understood.”

KangYoon was confident. In KangYoon’s previous life, Christie An also modeled for DearingHouse. Of course, that was some time after her debut, and this was indeed a little early, but with her image, he judged that there was no need to worry.

Having come out of the chairman’s office, KangYoon immediately headed towards the practice room where Christie An would be practicing in. She was practicing her expressions while looking at the mirror.

“Ah – Eh – Ih – Oh – Uh”

Christie An tried lifting her eyes, widening her cheeks, and using all the muscles of her face to create expressions. But she creased her face in dissatisfaction.

“Yes, that’s it. Use all the muscles in your face.”

“Team leader.”

Christie An only found KangYoon later since she was absorbed in practice, and flinched before turning around.

“How is it? Is it going well?”

“No, it’s too hard. It’s not easy to smile....”

“Making a bright smile isn’t so easy to do. Are you practicing in the dorms as well?”

“Yes. What was it again? Frog’s...”

“Back leg.” (This seems to be some exercise to ‘smile’. Think of it as a long-ass version of saying ‘cheese’)

“I’m also doing that. My face aches a little every morning.”

After seeing KangYoon work with JooAh on her album, she had changed a lot. She didn’t treat KangYoon badly before that, but she was indifferent. But right now, she had completely changed. She

didn't ask him any questions, thinking that everything he did must have a reason for it.

"The day after tomorrow is the shoot, you know that, right?"

"Yes. Oh.... I'm worried. JooYeon did so well, but what if I screw up...."

"Don't you actually want to say 'JooYeon did that much, and you think I can't?' or something like that, don't you?"

"...I guess I was found out."

She made a bashful smile, saying she was found out.

At that time, KangYoon immediately took out his phone and photographed her. KangYoon's actions were so fast that she panicked.

"Team leader."

Just as she was about to say something to him, he showed her the photo. In the photo was a figure of her that looked shy but was still smiling brightly.

"That's a good expression. I knew you had it in you. You've changed quite a bit."

"Ah, really?"

"Before, your eyes didn't move that much. Your mouth too. But look at this now. They're moving. Look."

KangYoon enlarged the photo and she could understand what he meant. However, she still seemed embarrassed about seeing herself up close and gave it back to KangYoon.

"This isn't a selfie or anything. I don't like such pictures."

"You'll need to get used to this in the future. Tomorrow, you'll be put under management going around receiving massages and other things."

"There's no practice?"

“The day after is the day of the shoot. It’s better to manage than practice.”

“Wow....”

She felt strange as though she had already debuted. No matter how sentimental she looked, she was a high school girl.

“Harmony is defined as the agreement of sound. To make it easier, the matching sounds will combine and harmonize. We’ll look at the most basic harmonies first, and that is the triad....”

By now, his seat was practically fixed at the back, KangYoon was listening to Professor Choi ChanYang’s lecture. Next to him was Ha JiYeon who was influenced by KangYoon into using various colored ball-point pens to take notes.

“Triads are composed of the root, the third and the fifth, and each sound is represented by numbers on the scale. For example....”

Professor Choi continued explaining while writing down the most basic C chord and the G chord. Since harmonics was a little like mathematics, the God of Sleep descended on a few students. However, that wasn’t the case with KangYoon.

It was only after they solved the practice questions did Professor Choi declare a break. The students rejoiced and ran out of class to take some time to smoke or simply just rest.

“Don’t you smoke, oppa?”

Ha JiYeon asked KangYoon, who was still studying the part he didn’t understand.

“I do. But I don’t feel like one right now.”

“How about one together?”

“I don’t want to smoke with a woman.”

“Whew, which era are you from? Then I’ll be going alone.”

This era was one where women smoked along with men. However, KangYoon hated that. When KangYoon refused, she went out to enjoy her own smoking time.

After she left, Professor Choi approached him.

“Professor.”

“Did you get home safely that day?”

“Yes. I did.”

“It’s good to see you becoming close to the other students.”

“Really? I was more impressed by you, though.”

Like how he embraced all of them softly without enforcing his own thoughts while he taught the composition students. KangYoon was really impressed by him.

‘Tch.’

Outside, Ha JiYeon grumbled while looking at KangYoon who was in a hot discussion with Professor Choi.

In the underground studio of MG Entertainment, Producer Oh JiWan was in the middle of working with KangYoon.

“I guess I can’t refuse if it’s from you.”

“Thanks for your time. I’ll definitely treat you later.”

Since KangYoon called him out on personal matters and Producer Oh had finished his job early as well, KangYoon felt really sorry. However, professional midi-works required Producer Oh’s hands.

Producer Oh started controlling the machine proficiently after powering the device on.

“Making each of the instruments come out of different speakers, eh? That feels slightly peculiar.”

“Hahaha. I wanted to try something new.”

“Oho, I should try this later too.”

Producer Oh followed KangYoon’s instructions. His hand was holding onto the score KangYoon received last time. Producer Oh quickly typed in the score into the program. And when he played them all, different instruments came out of different speakers.

‘I knew it. This is a lot easier to see.’

KangYoon was right. With one speaker being assigned to just one speaker, they each produced a different musical note. MRs were difficult to differentiate because they produced many different notes at once, but with the setup like this, it was easier to see the notes clearly. It was much closer to how a band would sound in real life. The notes combined and started emitting light.

‘Black....’

However, KangYoon creased his brows after seeing black light. Producer Oh’s expression wasn’t that good either.

“Team leader. This piece is too.... Is it an amateur’s?”

“It’s not that good, is it?”

“It feels like it’s just a mess of all the popular songs put together.”

“I think so too.”

This had no character to it and was just a jumbled mess. That was Producer Oh’s judgment. KangYoon’s evaluation wasn’t that much different either. He even felt that putting out a song like this may ruin the singer’s entire career as well as the planner’s.

“Then I’ll ask you again with another one.”

“It’s the same song, huh? But... hm.”

Producer Oh JiWan stared at the score for quite a while before starting to input them. It was the same song but he seemed to feel differently and inputted the notes delicately. Soon, the input

ended and the music started flowing into the studio.

‘Mm?’

But this time it was slightly different. The black light disappeared without a trace, and the music created white light. However, it wasn’t that bright.

‘It’s probably because there’s no vocals. But it’s not bad.’

KangYoon thought that this piece may be usable. It was definitely better than what the others put together. This time, this song didn’t feel like it was pieced together. He felt like this would become a good piece with a good vocalist.

“I think it’s the same song, but this is definitely better.”

“Do you feel that way too?”

“Of course. This one doesn’t feel like it was pieced together. But even so, I don’t feel like ‘this is it!’ or anything. I feel like it’s still lacking.... But I don’t know the reason.”

KangYoon was sure after listening to his evaluation.

That a good vocalist would make this a good song.

Originally, Christie An would have hurried to school along with Jung MinAh, but today, she had a different schedule.

She had an advertisement shooting today and had to commute to a large studio in Gangnam.

“...Greetings first. Greetings first....”

Before she departed, she listened to everything that she needed to know from Han JooYeon who had started before her and kept reminding herself with it.

“Don’t get angry, always put on a smile.... Ah, this is so hard. I must do all of this?”

“The trainers put it together.”

“Uu.... This is impossible.”

Christie An was frightened. Actually, she hated complex things rather than being nit-picky. She was quite tiresome in many ways.

“But Ris, is team leader going as well?”

“Yeah, why?”

“Oh, that’s good, then.”

However, Han JooYeon suddenly changed her advice. When Christie An expressed her question, she just shortened it into one sentence.

“He’ll do everything. Sheesh, I thought you were going alone for a second....”

“Why? I think team leader going is going to make things more awkward if not the same.”

“Girlie, you really don’t know anything.”

Han JooYeon scolded her for not knowing anything.

“If team leader is going, you have absolutely nothing to worry about. You’re blessed. I asked over and over in order to get him to come with me.... Is he being biased?”

While Christie An expressed her doubts about whether KangYoon going with her was really that good, the car horn could be heard from the outside. It was telling her to hurry, so she hurriedly left.

Inside the car was KangYoon as well as everyone else.

Since the shooting place wasn’t that far, they arrived soon. When they arrived, the staff were setting the shooting venue. On one side, the food truck was emitting steam from cooking, and on the other side, various lights were being set and the props were being placed as well.

“Wow....”

Christie An found everything inside to be a wonder. All of this was prepared for her and her alone. The more she thought about that, the more surprised she was. She felt her heart pounding thinking about going into the shoot while holding those items under artificial lighting.

“Christie, get ready.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon left the wandering Christie An to the makeup team and immediately went to the photographer. The photographer was a stereotypical artist-like man with long beard, and he seemed to have power in his eyes.

“Good morning. I’m Lee KangYoon.”

“Oh my word, it’s that ever-famous team leader himself.... I’m Yoo HanSe.”

The photographer seemed to be aware of who KangYoon was as well as he replied. With strength. KangYoon passed around nutritional tonics and asked them to take care of Christie An. Seeing KangYoon’s friendly attitude, everyone said yes with a smile.

In Christie An’s stead, who was undergoing makeup, KangYoon was doing the greetings.

“Wow, I never knew MG would bring out the food truck too.”

“Thanks for the meal.”

The food truck fees that was usually deducted from the production fees was also paid by KangYoon using company money. All the staff gave praises to MG’s magnanimity as well as showing their appreciation to KangYoon. All of this was an investment for the opinions of Christie An and the other girls in this industry.

After Christie finished preparing, the shoot began. Since this wasn’t just taking a few photos, but ‘producing’ photos that would

be put into a magazine, every single picture was delicately devised.

“Oh, my.... Miss Christie.... Can you relax your face a little more?”

“Sorry? Ah.... I’m sorry.”

She seemed to be nervous and was frozen stiff. With her expression stiff like that, photographer Yoo HanSe also started changing his expression. Her face was as frozen as ever no matter how much he tried to dispel it, and eventually, he put his hand on his face.

“Haa.... Rookies sure aren’t easy.”

However, thanks to KangYoon, he held in his frustration when he would have gone off shouting already otherwise. However, that line made Christie An die down. Photographer Yoo alternated his gaze between the results and Christie An before shouting.

“Let’s take a rest for a moment!”

He intended for the rest to be to cool their heads a little. He gathered the assistants and looked at the results on the laptop. He deleted the images that he didn’t like and shook his head. The photos weren’t that good.

Seeing Photographer Yoo like that, Christie An loosened her shoulders and went outside.

“Haa....”

Outside the studio, Christie An crouched down. She felt powerless with the first photo-shoot not going as she had intended. She thought she had it completely down with expression practice with the mirror as well as image-making, but the real deal was not that easy.

‘It’s so hard. I want to give up....’

All sorts of thoughts filled her mind. The entertainment industry was cruel to newbies, from stories that one strange rumor would

end her career to what would happen later if she screws this up, all sorts of things popped up in her head. However, she couldn't think of any solution.

Christie An entered with her shoulders still loose.

‘Huh?’

Having entered without any energy whatsoever, Christie An was met with a completely unexpected situation.

“She’s still immature because it’s her first time. But this time, it will be alright since she’s warmed up a little. Please take care of her.”

In front her was KangYoon, the same person that went head-to-head with a famous producer from Japan, lowering his head to the photographers and the other staff, asking to take care of her.

Chapter 56: Causing An Incident At A Music Circle (3)

‘Team leader....’

Looking at KangYoon lowering his head, Christie An felt stifled. The KangYoon she knew of was always upright. Not to mention the picky JooAh, he apparently didn’t bat an eyelid against the scary directors and even the chairman. However, right now, the same person was lowering his head to the photographers and the other staff.

“It’s because she hasn’t warmed up yet. Here, why don’t you eat this and....”

Christie An was a little shocked by KangYoon’s unusual figure. And she knew that all of this was for her. She couldn’t bear to keep watching that and eventually headed outside.

When she went outside, the other staff were also moving around busily. There seemed to be a lot of photos to be taken today as they were carrying around various props and devices.

“Aaah.... So hard.”

“What is?”

“Eek....”

She stood there absentmindedly, but suddenly someone called out to her from the side. It was manager Kim SeHui.

“Manager....”

“I did say call me oppa.”

“But the age difference is....”

“In this industry, everyone’s an oppa.”

“Wouldn’t uncle be better?”

“Forget it.”

Since Christie was very true to herself, Manager Kim SeHui had nothing to say either. Even so, he did see that Christie’s state wasn’t so good and asked quietly.

“First time’s hard, eh?”

“It didn’t go as how I wished it would’ve.”

“That’s obvious. Who would be able to do well from the beginning?”

“But because of me, the Team leader is....”

Christie An pointed towards KangYoon who could be seen between the gaps of the door. He was still going around to various staff and handing out health drinks and greeting them.

“Hm.... That’s actually supposed to be my job.”

“But why is Team leader doing it?”

“Because of you.”

A direct strike made Christie An lose her words.

“...You’re really direct. Well, I did make a lot of mistakes. Truth sure hurts....”

“So you know it. Since you are here, you’re supposed to be a pro. Originally, I was going to go around, but Team leader insisted on going. To give it more weight, he says. That people will be more concerned about you as this is your first stage.”

“.....”

“This industry is like a jungle. One weak point and you’ll be eaten. But you girls seem to have it easy. Since Team leader is doing everything for you.... You girls, I think you will become really good. Go to the bathroom and get yourself together. We’ll start again soon.”

Manager Kim SeHui entered the studio. He had to see the current

state of things in the studio after all. Of course, he also didn't want to be called lazy just because KangYoon did everything. The highest person responsible being on the same scene was quite tiring in various ways.

‘...Let's do it well this time.’

Christie An resolved herself to do well this time. She didn't want to see KangYoon lowering his head for her sake again after all.

“Yes! That's it! Good! Those are the eyes I want! Just like that!”

Photographer Yoo HanSe kept shouting ‘good’ while pressing the shutter. The alternation of a bright smile and a cold expression gave a sort of a twist. The scenes that he could never shoot before the break started pouring out continuously and he pressed the shutter like mad.

The lights and the reflectors in the studio kept flashing while Christie An did her various expressions. With results piling up, the staff also became serious.

Meanwhile, KangYoon was watching the shoot. Around him were the managers and coordinators that were watching as well. These people would change Christie's makeup once a round of photos was over, and contributed for better pictures.

“Fuah....”

However, thanks to the shoot running for quite a while, a few of the managers and coordinators went out to smoke. However, KangYoon kept his place. That was because he knew that Christie was conscious of him. He was also nervous about how things would turn out so he could not leave her Christie alone here. The cigarettes kept calling out to him but he held it in.

And finally.

“Thanks for your hard work!”

With Yoo HanSe's declaration, the shoot was over. KangYoon immediately went over to him.

"How are the results?"

When he asked, Yoo HanSe put a thumbs up without any words.

"It's the best. Hey, the start and finish is too different, isn't it?"

"Really?"

"It's just that...."

"Just what?"

"Sheesh, I don't get why Christie keeps looking your way, Team leader. Hahaha. Anyway, today's photos were great. Shall I show you?"

KangYoon could see the results through the laptop. Christie's smiling face and cold, proud face gave a good contrast. Yoo HanSe judged that this was good enough for the clients and packed the equipment.

Having finished talking with the photographer, KangYoon headed to the waiting room. The managers and coordinators were looking after Christie.

"Thanks for your work."

"Thank you for your work, sir."

There weren't many words. Was it hard? How was your first time shooting? – nothing like that. However, Christie felt an unspeakable gratefulness towards KangYoon. This was her first work and KangYoon kept the workplace up for her who was shaking on the inside. The figure that lowered his head for her sake and the weight that held the shooting venue in place was incomparable to anything. She finally knew why JooAh, a seonbae she admired, wanted to work with KangYoon so much.

When they packed their stuff and boarded the van, the sun was already setting. Christie was tired thanks to the day-long shoot and

fell asleep with her head resting on the window.

“Looks like she was tired.”

“Put this on her.”

KangYoon gave manager Kim SeHui a small blanket. Christie felt something warm in her sleep and could sleep comfortably.

Chairman Won JinMoon was satisfied after receiving a report about Han JooYeon and Christie An from KangYoon.

“Thanks for your hard work. Looks like I’m becoming more and more biased towards you nowadays.”

“Thank you.”

KangYoon received a sign in the papers with ease as he always did and was about to leave. However, the chairman seemed to have a lot of things he wanted to ask about and held him back.

“Why don’t you join me for a cup of tea.”

Soon, a beautiful secretary lady came in with tea. It wasn’t at the level of the Junshan Yinzhen that he had before, but this tea had great fragrance as well. Chairman Won JinMoon enjoyed the faint fragrance of the tea and started speaking comfortably.

“So, is Seo HanYu up next?”

“Yes, I’ll report to you soon.”

“Okay. Actually, what I really want to hear from you is about the announcement of the girl group itself. Not only me, the investors are sensitive to this as well. I think you know this already.”

“Of course.”

“There are many people that are sensitive to the stock market. I don’t know why they are doing this even though we aren’t like speculative capital for them. Although you did well until now, you need to be very, very careful since you might be ditched to the

bottom with one mistake. Especially things like scandals. The girls that have been exposed to the media will have to be careful in their actions.”

Chairman Won JinMoon’s words carried weight. KangYoon also aware of that. As large as MG Entertainment was, there were many things at stake as well. The entertainment industry was a place where people could talk about someone easily and may drop to the bottom of the pits once negative words went around.

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“I believe in you, so please take it as an old man’s worries. Oh, look at the time. What’s your next schedule?”

“Once Jung MinAh is announced as well, it will become November. At that time, news that MG Entertainment is sending out a girl group will be spread around. I’m planning to host a showcase at that time, inviting the related companies and personnel.”

“You’re considering quite a lot of things. So it isn’t like the budget is high for nothing. What happened to broadcasting the debut process?”

“I decided not to. From what we’ve seen, I came to a judgment that advertising through the internet had plenty of effects. I judged that there is no need to waste any more budget and decided to not do the broadcast.”

“Isn’t that a waste? It will be quite good since this is something that didn’t exist until now. The PD there will be disappointed.”

“I talked to them so they could understand.”

Chairman Won JinMoon was first suspicious about KangYoon’s judgment but eventually accepted it. Right now, Han JooYeon and Christie An were doing very well, so he thought that KangYoon was right. These two had already given a strong impact to the public already.

“Got it, then. So, I just need to look forward to November?”

“Yes. You will be able to see the girl group’s name and everything else as well.”

“So war will start then.”

“Yes, all of this now is just a skirmish. The real deal will begin at that time.”

“I sure look forward to it. If a skirmish is this strong, then how strong would be the actual thing?”

KangYoon could only smile since the chairman always pushed him on like a friendly neighborhood grandpa. However, he was aware that the backlash would be strong once he failed. That was why he was always careful with his actions.

Chairman Won JinMoon left the words that he will visit the girls to commend them later and sent KangYoon out.

When KangYoon left, he muttered while drinking the cooled tea.

“An amazing fellow. I became much more comfortable thank to him. Fufu.”

He had it very comfortable because he could focus on operating the business now.

When KangYoon returned to his office, what greeted him was a pile of work. After working with Christie An and Han JooYeon, a lot of paperwork that required him to approve and sign had greeted him.

“...Yeah. My place is here, where else could it be?”

Opening the mountain of paperwork, KangYoon started working. Although the majority were from the PR team, there were some from the liaison team. The planning team was needless to say, always busy.

When he was in the middle of work, KangYoon's phone started ringing. It was Professor Choi ChangYang's call. KangYoon accepted the call while wondering. He said that he called because he was worried that KangYoon hadn't turned up to the lecture.

"Oh.... I'm sorry. My work became busy."

– I was worried. I wondered if anything happened to you.

"Not at all. Sorry for worrying you."

– If it's alright with you, I'm currently nearby, so can I give you the lecture there?

KangYoon had no reason to refuse. Harmonics was the area he wanted to learn the most nowadays. Although he was doing some studies in his spare time, being taught was a hundred times better than teaching himself.

"Will that be okay with you?"

– This much isn't even hard. You said you were working, so can I go to your company then?

"I appreciate it."

KangYoon asked Professor Choi to come to the nearby café. He could invite him to his office, but he thought that it would be rude to invite him to his messy workplace. Having made an appointment, KangYoon finished the call with him.

He quickly finished his work and headed to the café. When he arrived, Professor Choi was already waiting for him.

"It's here."

"Oh, you've arrived early. I should have left earlier."

"Not at all, I wasn't bored at all while waiting."

Professor Choi greeted KangYoon with his soft smile as always. He took out the books and talked about Choi YoonMi. (T/N: Who the heck is that, author? He might be talking about the band,

‘Recovery’, I’m not sure)

“It’s good to see that you’ve become closer to the students. It looks like the ones actually working in the field have good senses.”

“It’s because they’re nice kids. I’m thankful instead.”

“I did worry for a little.... But since you treat the students well and they like you, I’m completely good with it. Please take care of us in the future as well.”

KangYoon smiled and opened the books

One month had passed since he started learning harmonics. Unlike when he began, he started becoming more friendly towards the tadpoles in the books. Harmony, tones, chords, etc – he was starting to get used to their concept and their uses. Of course, he still didn’t know theories about composing or how to use them in actual application, but he could now understand how things worked. Professor Choi explained things very clearly and KangYoon was eager to learn as well.

When the hot coffee was about to cool down, Professor Choi leaned back in the chair and spoke out in a tired voice.

“Shall we rest a little?”

“Shall we?”

That was two hours after they started. The two didn’t know how much time had passed as neither of them said that they should end it there. While Professor Choi went off to the toilet, KangYoon went over the pages to revise.

“Wait. It starts off with a D, and the next is an A or a C?”

It was easy when he was listening to the explanation but going over it by himself was quite hard. Tadpoles looking like musical notes was just a temporary thing. Tadpoles were still tadpoles.

“This is C# after A.”

At that moment, a voice could be heard from behind him. When

he turned around, it was Min JinSeo.

“Oh, is it....? Wait, JinSeo? What are you doing here?”

“I came here to drink some coffee but came here since I saw you. Pff, you’re learning such an elementary book?”

“Oh. I’m actually weak at music theory. So I decided that I should learn a little.”

“Eeh? Really? That’s a shock.”

Min JinSeo made a playful expression. KangYoon shrugged his shoulders and said that it was possible. Her face had very light makeup and a smile. She had a bright smile because she was happy to see KangYoon. Thanks to that, the employees at the café, started whispering to each other even though this café was close to MG Entertainment building.

“I’ll come back after ordering.”

“Okay.”

She seemed to be getting used to her fame and didn’t react much to the people that were whispering about her. KangYoon was proud to see her like this. Min JinSeo was becoming more like a star while he wasn’t aware of it.

When KangYoon turned his attention back to his books, Professor Choi came back.

“Did you revise a lot?”

“No, it sure is hard to do it by myself. Looks like there’s a time for everything.”

“You’re doing quite well, you know? Oh, and at this part....”

While Professor Choi went over the things that KangYoon was unsure about, a presence could be felt behind him. It was Min JinSeo with a hot cup of coffee.

“Sir, can I sit next to you?”

“Hm? Uh, the thing is....”

“Mi..... Min JinSeooooooooooooooooo?!”

However, Professor Choi’s eyes widened after seeing her. KangYoon was surprised to see him so restless, unlike his usual demeanor.

“Yes?”

“..I.... I....”

Min JinSeo also titled her head in confusion when Professor Choi abruptly stood up from his seat.

“I.... I... am a fan!”

“.....”

KangYoon and Min JinSeo only smiled awkwardly after seeing Professor Choi lowering his head and holding his hands out.

Chapter 57. Causing An Incident At A Music Circle (4)

Min JinSeo and Professor Choi ChanYang had an enjoyable time as she gave him her signature and also took a photo with him. Professor Choi repeatedly thanked her at the unexpected encounter. KangYoon was inwardly surprised to see someone change so drastically, but couldn't express it. Living alone could lead to interesting circumstances.

After parting ways with Professor Choi, the two set off onto a quiet street.

“Hahaha. I never knew you were learning music, sir.”

Unlike normal, KangYoon got onboard Min JinSeo's van. He repeatedly refused since someone might say something about them, but he couldn't refuse after Min JinSeo desperately pleaded with him. Of course, the fact that there weren't many people around as well as the fact that he could go home early and comfortably with the van also contributed to his actions.

“A person is supposed to learn for their entire life. Who knows? I might become a composer in the future.”

“Then you'll make a song for me as well?”

“You don't even have any interest in music, though.”

KangYoon knew very well that Min JinSeo had no interest in music or singing. However, Min JinSeo didn't seem to be joking and kept speaking.

“If it's something that you composed.... Perhaps it's a different story? You know, I was offered to become a singer too. My talents were acknowledged.”

“Do you think this industry is so easy?”

KangYoon was just going to laugh it over, thinking it was a joke.

However, Min JinSeo kept insisting.

“I wasn’t joking. If it’s something you made, I might want to try singing it?”

“Sheesh. Fine, I’ll give you one once I compose one. I don’t know when it will be though.”

“You promised?”

“Fine, fine. I can’t even differentiate between tadpoles and notes. When do you think I’ll be composing? Hahaha.”

It was utter nonsense, but KangYoon accepted it. Composition was still far away for him. In the first place, the reason he was learning music more systematically was from a wild thought that his ability to ‘see’ music may improve if he did. Going beyond harmonics and into composition was still impossible for him.

However, Min JinSeo didn’t seem to take it that way.

“You’ll be able to do it, definitely.”

“Who was it that asked me ‘who am I to trust?’.”

“That’s... just the past. How can it be the same now?”

When the conversation turned into past stories, Min JinSeo’s face reddened in embarrassment. KangYoon teased her, saying she was a tomato. A nice atmosphere of violence and love floated around.

While they were talking, the van eventually arrived near KangYoon’s house.

“Thanks.”

“So you live in a place like this.”

Min JinSeo looked around from inside the van. She tried to see him off after getting off the van, but KangYoon stopped her from doing so. Min JinSeo looked slightly disappointed, but KangYoon was strict with things like this. Min JinSeo was disappointed but

still saw him off with a smile.

“Well, then, sir. See you later.”

“You too.”

When the door to the van closed, KangYoon slowly headed towards his house. Not long after, KangYoon saw HeeYoon who was returning from grocery shopping.

“Oppa?”

“HeeYoon.”

Seeing his sister on the street made him more joyful. KangYoon took the large plastic bags from out of HeeYoon’s hands. HeeYoon tried to refuse, but KangYoon ignored her and started walking. When HeeYoon followed, the siblings started walking under the night sky.

“Oppa, it’s a van.”

HeeYoon pointed towards the van that just passed by the two. It was Min JinSeo’s van that KangYoon was on until just now.

“You’re right.”

“I always think of you when I see a van. You always rode in one in the past.”

“That’s all in the past now.”

Talking with his sister, KangYoon headed home.

There was no work for the concert team. However, with the increasing amount of work for the girl group, the large tower of paperwork on KangYoon’s desk was increasing instead. Not only that, his work didn’t just consist of approving paperwork on his desk. Meetings were the basics, and he had to be on-site sometimes and had to take care of other things as well. Even three KangYoons would be tired out.

“Ahju.... Team leader. Aah, it’s so hard....”

Jung MinAh complained as soon as she saw KangYoon enter the practice room. KangYoon ruffled her hair with love. Jung MinAh struggled and complained to him again, but KangYoon just ignored her.

“What’s up? Grumbler.”

“What do you mean by that! I have a pretty name called Jung MinAh! Anyways... A dance competition? And you notified me a month before the actual thing? I will run out of practice time you know....”

“MinAh, if it’s you, one month is more than long enough for practice.”

“Th.... That’s true.”

Jung MinAh grumbled saying that she was notified late and didn’t have enough time to practice. However, KangYoon was calm and didn’t think that at all.

“If you can’t win a competition like this, you’ll embarrass yourself in front of the others.”

“Tch, that’s a lot of pressure you’re putting on my shoulders. Well.... You seem to believe in me so I’ll show you. But also....”

Jung MinAh pouted just when it was about to be over. Then she started grumbling again.

“Team leader. I also want to go on TV and shoot adverts. But why do I have to go to such a teeny weeny competition? Why~?”

“What, that’s your problem?”

“It’s not cool at all. Well.... I don’t want to go to a TV program to act cute in front of grandmas like what SamSoon is doing....”

She had a large pride and that was the reason she was pouting. Han JooYeon’s TV program, Christie An’s commercial, Seo HanYu’s music video, Ailee Jung’s educational program – she was

envious of all of them.

“Sheesh, you’re being too honest.”

“I’m always like that. Heheh.”

“But we can’t go to a B-boy competition, can we? Do you want to learn to head-spin or something?”

“I don’t see why not. I’ll just learn it.”

“Oh yeah? Let’s spin. My head is spinning too dammit. Come here.”

“Uaak! You evil team leader!”

Jung MinAh kept complaining to KangYoon. However, never did she go against KangYoon’s words. Perhaps her actions contrasting to her words was a type of charm.

After another round of venting her troubles, Jung MinAh asked in a calm tone.

“Obviously, you’re coming with me as well, right?”

“How’s that obvious? I’m busy.”

“What, you went with the others like Han JooYeon.”

“But you do well by yourself though.”

“Ah, dammit. I’m not doing this.”

Even though she said that Jung MinAh knew that KangYoon was indeed very busy. In fact, she was the closest member out of the 6. However, Jung MinAh seemed to have noticed that it was really difficult for him to attend and switched topics while grumbling.

KangYoon finished checking up on Jung MinAh, and the other girls as well, so he headed to the 2nd floor for a meeting. After being reported on the current situation by the employees, he gave orders about the showcase, and the day passed by in a flash.

The next day, someone knocked on KangYoon’s door when he was in his office, working.

“Come in.”

The one that entered was the exclusive composer of MG Entertainment, Loin. She stroked her flashy hair backward once and approached KangYoon.

“Hello, Team leader.”

“Welcome.”

She gave KangYoon a USB and some papers. When KangYoon flipped over the pages, it was a music score.

“So, the song is out.”

“Yes. I’ve heard that it will be a tight schedule. So, I put a little effort in.”

“Thanks for your work. Shall we listen to it then?”

KangYoon put the USB drive onto his PC and played the music. Light, yet rhythmical music started flowing out. The trainee that sung the voice had a pretty good voice as....

‘It’s JooAh’s voice?’

KangYoon was confused. Composer Loin explained to relieve his confusion.

“JooAh requested it herself, saying that a senior must look after her juniors’ first song or something.”

“Sheesh, she’ll kill the girls’ motivation.”

What good would it be if the guide song might be better than the actual song? What seonbae, it was obvious that she was rioting to get KangYoon. It was obvious that the girls would be pressured immensely once they listen to the song. How was he supposed to accept this... KangYoon felt a headache coming.

At that moment, a thought passed by in his head.

‘Wait, this song.... It’s that same one.’

KangYoon thought back to his ‘original’ life. ‘Our story’ was the

only song that EDDIOS had failed in his previous life. Thinking about the failure in his previous life, KangYoon felt that he had to reject this song, but on one hand, another thought sprung up in his mind as well.

‘Right now, the members are different, aren’t they?’

The EDDIOS of his previous life and the EDDIOS of his current life was completely different. Perhaps it should be fine then? However, he did think that this was lacking somewhat. KangYoon’s expression became serious the more he listened to the music.

After the song ended, Composer Loin asked KangYoon.

“Was it no good?”

“No, it’s not that. I’m just thinking about something.”

“You can be honest.”

Composer Loin was nervous. In the composer’s shoes, getting her music rejected was akin to her child being abandoned. Perhaps KangYoon would do that... she was worried and clenched her fist.

“Don’t you have another song?”

“Another... song, you say?”

As expected.

Loin just shut her eyes.

“I think I’ll need to compare it. Are there any other songs?”

“Yes, of course.... However, there’s no guide version and it’s just the melody and the score.”

Composer Loin appealed that she put more weight into this song. However, KangYoon was unshaken. He went his way to find the song in the USB and played it back and checked the score on her phone as well.

Since there was no guide song, he could only feel the basics. The

exciting but light theme was not that much different from the previous one. However, KangYoon approved the papers anyway.

“Looks like we’ll have to try out both. Let’s talk about it after that.”

“Understood. I’ll have it done by tomorrow.”

After negotiating with Composer Loin, a little more, KangYoon finished his job regarding the song.

A holiday.

KangYoon was currently at Hallyeo Arts university where a student band was currently in session.

“Hey, that’s not it, here, you need to....”

“Really? I think this way is better though....”

Moon MiJin (T/N: Who? You mean Moon MiYoung?) and Goo HyungSuk were currently quarreling about who was right. KangYoon was just watching from next to Professor Choi ChanYang.

‘That girl, she gave me her score as well.’

KangYoon kept giving signs to Lee HyunAh, however, she was silent all this time. She only said that she didn’t like it at times, but she didn’t express her opinion. He even asked Producer Oh JiWan to tell her... KangYoon felt quite stifled.

“Should we have some food first?”

Long after 2 p.m., Professor Choi offered to eat and the practice AKA discussion was finally over. He ordered some Chinese delivery food and everyone enjoyed their meals.

KangYoon, who had Gan-jjajang, left to brush his teeth. When he left the student council building after brushing his teeth for a breath of air, Lee HyunAh was absentmindedly sitting on a bench

alone.

“What are you doing?”

“Ah, oppa.”

Lee HyunAh moved a little to make space for KangYoon.

“You didn’t talk about the song today either.”

“.....”

“I think you should step up.”

No matter how KangYoon urged her on, she stayed silent. It was quite clear that she didn’t want to break the unwritten rule between seniors and juniors.

“That damn hierarchy. Give it to me.”

In the end, KangYoon couldn’t hold it and snatched the score from her.

“Oppa.”

“Sheesh, you’re such a tiring girl....”

“.....”

KangYoon wanted to see the results of this song, even if it was because of his efforts to get her to. Lee HyunAh seemed to be hesitating, but KangYoon just turned around and left her for the practice room.

It was practice time again. KangYoon approached the leader Min ChanMin.

“Hyung-nim, do you have anything to say?”

“I got some help from the professor and had a look at the score, can you see it for a second?”

Professor Choi, who was listening from behind, looked at KangYoon in wonder. However, he nodded his head after looking at KangYoon’s eyes.

Min ChanMin started looking over the score that he got from KangYoon. He played the melody with the synthesizer and eventually called everyone over.

“Hey, HyungSuk, isn’t this part quite good?”

“Whoa, this part was always strange. Wow, this part is really good.”

“The loosened part was tightened as well. I like this one.”

Even Kim HeeJin seemed to like the score that KangYoon handed over and praised it. When Kim HeeJin showed the score to Moon MiYoung as well, she also said it was good and sat on the drums, saying they should try it.

“Hey, I thought you didn’t have any experience in composing. This part is somewhere even we were stuck in for quite a while....”

“I received the professor’s help.”

KangYoon immediately shifted the responsibility to Professor Choi. Everyone, like him, was very positive towards the score.

At that moment, Lee HyunAh came into the practice room.

“Hey, HyunAh, have a look at this score. KangYoon-oppa brought it and it’s quite good.”

“What?”

Lee HyunAh received the score after hearing Kim HeeJin’s words. It was her own score that KangYoon snatched from her. She alternated between KangYoon and the score.

“How is it, isn’t it good?”

“Oh, yes. It’s good.”

“Then let’s try this. Whee, this will be a good one.”

Kim HeeJin dragged Lee HyunAh to the vocal’s position while she took out her bass. When everyone got into their positions, a powerful song started being played out.

After practice. KangYoon was slowly heading home.

‘The song is good.’

The strong white light from the practice still lingered around KangYoon. Everyone seemed to be charmed by that effect and kept praising KangYoon. Though, KangYoon just laughed it over since it wasn’t even his....

He was waiting for the subway when a familiar face greeted him.

“Oppa.”

“HyunAh.”

It was the owner of the score, Lee HyunAh. She was alone in the station after sending off several trains.

“I was waiting.”

“You should’ve gone ahead.”

KangYoon was heading home later than everyone else because he had a coffee time with Professor Choi ChanYang.

“I thought I’d at least say thanks. Thank you. For letting me be able to use my music....”

Lee HyunAh took a deep bow towards KangYoon. However, KangYoon shook his head. He didn’t like this.

“I didn’t want to be thanked like this. I wanted you to say it yourself.”

“...I’m sorry.”

“There will be a lot more occasions like this in the future you know? You’ll act the same when the same thing happens. You shouldn’t be saying sorry to me.”

KangYoon’s words were sharp. Lee HyunAh lowered her head. She didn’t have any way to retort.

“I only spoke out since I didn’t want a song that I found good to be buried for good. Strictly speaking, you shouldn’t be thanking me. But if I had to say something, I wish you wouldn’t avoid things like this in the future.”

“....Yes. But even so, thank you.... For letting us play my song.”

“You have to say to them that you were the one who made it.”

Although KangYoon was a little harsh on her, she really was grateful towards him. If not for him, she would have suffered inwardly in the future as well. KangYoon’s goodwill towards her wasn’t light since he had a look at her composition and even acted out for her.

“...Fine. That’s enough scolding. It’s not like you’re a singer under me anyway.”

KangYoon thought that this was enough and got on the train. Lee HyunAh also sat next to him.

Unlike last week, the two didn’t speak to each other. Lee HyunAh took out her phone and KangYoon closed his eyes. The empty train gave the two a time to rest.

However, KangYoon’s phone started vibrating loudly. It was a call from Professor Choi. When KangYoon greeted him, Professor Choi went onto the topic.

– The song you gave us today was quite good, so I thought it’d be a waste to just have it heard by us. So I’m planning to take this to the competition. Is that fine with you?”

“A competition, eh? That sounds interesting. Yes. I’m fine with it.”

KangYoon wasn’t going to say that the song was Lee HyunAh’s until she said it. One had to take matters into one’s own hands. KangYoon accepted, wondering ‘let’s see how far this goes’.

– Thanks. I put the application in right now.

“Whew, looks like I should go to cheer on. What competition is it?”

KangYoon asked lightly without pressure. However, a big surprise was waiting for him over the phone.

– College Pop Festival.

“...WHAT? Wait a minute. Can you say that again?”

– The College Pop Festival.

KangYoon was rendered speechless at the country-wide scale of the competition.

Chapter 58. First Appearance (1)

– Although we did create the base, it was you who finished the song. I really should have asked for permission beforehand, but there was no time, so.... I'm sorry.

“Not at all. It's a good opportunity. I will also go to cheer them on if I have the time.”

After finishing the call, KangYoon turned around to Lee HyunAh who was just looking at her phone.

“Apparently, you're going to a competition with your song.”

“A competition?”

Although Lee HyunAh was doing something else, she was still listening. From the moment KangYoon was surprised too when the word ‘competition’ was mentioned, she knew that it wasn't such a light topic.

“Apparently, you are going to the College Pop Festival with the song you composed.”

“.....”

“HyunAh?”

“.....”

Seeing Lee HyunAh still unresponsive, KangYoon called out to her a few more times. He tried pushing her and poking her as well, however, there was still no reaction. After a blinking a few times, she...

“EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEHHHHHHK????”

Screamed out. Although there was no one around to see her, KangYoon still looked around.

“You freaked me out.”

“C, C, C, C, C, College Pop fest?!” (E/N: CCCCC-Combo breaker)

“Yup. It looks like the professor liked it.”

“We’re going there?! With my song?!”

She felt something waving towards her heart. Confusion, panic, joy, it was hard to describe it with just one word. KangYoon tried explaining the things he heard from Professor Choi ChangYang.

“College Pop Festival is a big competition that’s been running for over 30 years though! There will be a lot of people attending too....”

“So what? Original composition, check, band, check. You meet the criteria though?”

“Aah.... I don’t know what’s going on.”

She just lowered her head and didn’t raise it back up. The coming storm wasn’t easy for her to endure. KangYoon patted her back as he consoled her.

“The basics are the same whether you go to a big competition or a small competition. Preparation is everything. If you prepare well, there will be a possibility. I’m not sure if the Professor knows or not, but this means that your song is good. Isn’t that a good thing?”

“.....”

“Well, if you keep chickening out like you did today, that will all be for naught.”

Of course, KangYoon’s consolation came with some sharp words.

Lee HyunAh resolved herself while feeling the warmth on her back.

“Where’s this?”

“Wow....”

Jung MinAh and Ailee Jung couldn’t hide their surprise after

seeing the underground studio. Seo HanYu and Lee SamSoon felt the same way.

“Young’uns....”

Christie An poured them some cold water.

“You’ve only come here once too. Don’t boast.”

“How can zero and one be the same?”

Jung MinAh and Christie An quarreled while Han JooYeon sighed. Just as the quarrel was about to become a fight for the strongest, KangYoon, Composer Loin and Producer Oh JiWan came in.

“Hello!”

Producer Oh JiWan replied with a smile after hearing their vivid greetings.

“Kids sure are good.”

“Uu, oppa. You really are.... Hey, you’re drooling.”

“Soonie, you like the boys too.”

“I only like the guys with abs. And hey, why are you calling me by my real name? I said call me Loin in the company.”

Producer Oh and Composer Loin were also preparing to fight against reality. Of course, just preparing.

Like that, everyone prepared for the song selection and the recording. The booth in the studio already had 6 microphones as well as other devices set up.

KangYoon told the girls of the things that they were going to do and made them enter the booth.

“Let’s start with the first one.”

Producer Oh started setting Han JooYeon’s microphone since she was at the far right. Unlike JooAh, these girls had no preset settings so they had to set the microphones on the go.

“Ah-ah. Mic test—My hometown –.”

With Han JooYeon’s as the beginning, all the microphones were starting to get set. Producer Oh was satisfied, saying everyone’s voice matched each other’s well. KangYoon watched the process from behind.

Since there were 6 of them, it took quite a long time to set. Although the setting took a long time, KangYoon put a lot of attention into it since this would eventually be recorded.

“Shall we start?”

Producer Oh asked KangYoon as soon as the settings were done. When KangYoon’s order came, the MR started flowing out of the speakers. Since they hadn’t separated the song into parts yet, they decided to sing it all together.

The girls counted down the beats and started singing.

– One day – at the park at night— playing on the white – horse rocker – –

The first song was ‘Our Story’. KangYoon concentrated on the musical notes that came out of the girls.

‘It’s not bad.’

The song progressed but there was nothing that caught his eyes. The light mood and the girls’ voices filled with vitality was creating a good mood.

‘What is the reason that this failed in my previous life?’

As the song reached its climax, KangYoon was wondering about this. The white light was in no way, weak, and the musical notes from the girls weren’t strange either. It was literally just, ‘not bad’.

“Wow, this is a good one.”

“Of course, it’s Team leader’s request after all.”

Composer Loin smiled after hearing Producer Oh JiWan’s words.

She seemed satisfied about the praise.

Like that, the first song ended without a hitch.

– Team leader, was our song okay?

Han JooYeon asked from inside the booth. KangYoon answered to her through the microphone.

“It’s not bad. I think your voices fit well too. Shall we go over the next one then?”

– Yes.

The girls were in great condition as well. Everyone seemed to be full of energy. When the next song was prepared, Producer Oh gave a signal and the girls prepared to sing.

The second song ‘Together’ began.

– When I open my eyes the fresh – sunlight—greet me – and the expectation—for today—

This was the same as well. Although the vividness was completely different from the previous song, the light wasn’t that different. The white light was constant until the very end. Both Producer Oh JiWan and Composer Loin listened to the girls’ voices until the end with their eyes closed.

After the 3-minute song ended and the girls left the booth, KangYoon gathered them.

“Let’s do it by parts this time.”

“What?”

Parts so suddenly? Everyone was confused at KangYoon’s words.

“With all of you singing together, it feels like a choir instead. I can’t get the exact feeling. Let’s do it by parts this time. Miss Loin wrote the parts right?”

“Yes.”

“So HanYu will be up first. Let’s....”

KangYoon distributed parts to the girls just as Composer Loin had intended to. The parts where he thought that it didn't fit, he changed or put two together at once. After distributing the parts for both songs while listening to the girls' opinions as well, he sent the girls inside the booth again.

“Start.”

With KangYoon's signal, the song started again. This time, Seo HanYu's voice flowed out first.

– One day – at the park at night— playing on the white – horse rocker – –

Seeing that the notes were different from the first time, KangYoon focused a little more. Seo HanYu was generating a yellow musical note and the light was slightly stronger than before. This was because the song had to have a softer start but was too strong with the six girls singing together.

After Seo HanYu's verse ended, Lee SamSoon caught it next.

– If my feelings are indeed – love – Please cherish – this me as well —

Lee SamSoon's voice was neither high nor low but had power. She was the perfect one to raise the mood. Thanks to her influence, the white light started being strengthened after her musical note was mixed into it. KangYoon recorded it down and kept watching the girls.

‘Our story’ was a good piece. He even wondered why this song failed in his previous life. Although the members had changed, he didn't know that this song would fit them so well.

The song ended, and while Composer Loin and Producer Oh JiWan were high-fiving each other, KangYoon urged them onto the next song.

“Yes, yes.”

Producer Oh JiWan played the MR for the next song ‘Together’ next. This time, the first verse was taken by Ailee Jung.

– When I open my eyes the fresh – sunlight—greet me – and the expectation—for today—

Since the start of this piece was low-pitched, her low voice was emphasized. Even the other girls were surprised. Producer Oh also seemed to be surprised after seeing the number of bars represented on the machine.

‘Ailee definitely has a good low voice.’

KangYoon was satisfied with the low voice that was a little like jazz. It was worth it to specialize their characteristics until now. With good results being shown off, he felt quite good.

The next off was Han JooYeon.

– The smile that makes me shy – without me knowing – I think there will be good things –

Han JooYeon did well in the high-pitch but also did well in raising a low verse to high. However, KangYoon also thought it was slightly disappointing. He thought about how it would be if Jung MinAh did that part. He was worried about the other members if Han JooYeon was being too emphasized. It was a bit like balancing the dance so that Jung MinAh wouldn’t crush them all.

The light from the girls was strong. The white light from ‘Our Story’ was quite strong as well. And this song was on par with it too. When Christie An emphasized the climax, the brightening white light made KangYoon fall into a dilemma.

– Let us think about – the good things—

The song finished with everyone singing together. The strong light eventually faded and KangYoon told the girls to come out while saying that they did well.

“Wow, Soonie. Both are great.”

“Yep, though, I did have to wrack my brains for these two. But the rewards are worth it if it’s this team. And hey, did you just call me Soonie again? Do you want to fight?”

“Lol. Looks like we’ll get some pretty money this time.”

Composer Loin imitated counting money like an evil man before acting like she would attack Producer Oh JiWan.

Both Producer Oh JiWan and Composer Loin had a good feeling about this project.

“You did two songs. How were they?”

When KangYoon asked the girls, everyone answered in the same voice.

“They were both great.”

They seemed to still be deluded about ‘their own song’ and they seemed to like both. KangYoon understood how they felt but still cool-headedly told them.

“We need to set on a title song. In the showcase, we’ll do both, but we do need to choose one for the cover piece. Which song do you think is better?”

“Hmm....”

However, no one chose easily. They liked both. It felt like they finally wore clothes that fit them after wearing someone else’s for all this time.

While everyone looked at each other and were indecisive, KangYoon was thinking about it himself as well.

‘Is it because the team members have changed from my previous life? Our Story isn’t bad either.’

KangYoon predicted that ‘Our Story’ would be clearly bad and ‘Together’ would be clearly good. However, they were actually

neck-and-neck. With that being the case, deciding after considering the dance routine, the lighting, and the theme of the debut was one way to decide this.

“Girls.”

When KangYoon called out to them, everyone focused.

“Let’s do it this way. Let’s practice both, and decide on the title song later. Practicing both will be advantageous for events later too. What do you think?”

“Okay.”

Jung MinAh answered first. The others replied as well.

“Then let’s go into recording after a little bit of rest. Producer Oh, shall we rest a little?”

“Okay.”

With KangYoon’s words, everyone turned into laundry and hung themselves on chairs and sofas. In fact, the girls had built up a lot of fatigue.

The girls were finally all revealed. All the members were revealed in different ways, and the reactions were different as well. Even though they hadn’t debuted yet, a fan club was made, and with various news articles coming out on the internet, reactions started appearing. A fan club for trainees was something unexpected by everyone.

Of course, they had anti-fans as well. The anti-fans made various rumors saying that they didn’t like this girl for this reason and that girl for that reason. However, the company meticulously managed their personal lives and practically forbid any social network activities, the source of all rumors. Most of the rumors were baseless as well. Any photos of them were from TV programs or their everyday life at school or their graduation album so the

rumors didn't last long. KangYoon's contribution to this was big since he managed all of this.

The day Jung MinAh won the dance competition, Jung MinAh was revealed in the MG Entertainment home page and the profiles of all 6 girls were tied into one. And the 6 girls were officially named 'EDDIOS'. There was a link to the fan café as well where photos about their practice rooms and other simple things were being uploaded. The fans started advertising the group known as EDDIOS by themselves while the anti-fans also started a war with a few set of materials. Everyone was busy making popcorn to watch, while the media wanted their own share of interviews and articles as well. It was literally becoming a hot issue.

KangYoon successfully made the girls into a hot topic as he had intended and put a lot of mind into the PR team.

"....Then please watch the internet like you're doing now."

"Yes."

"You do know that today's work ends early right?"

"Don't worry."

After the meeting with the PR team, KangYoon headed to the roof. Working all day made his body crave for some nicotine. However, when he arrived at the roof, his phone started ringing instead. Since it was an unknown number, KangYoon thought of rejecting it but received it anyway.

"Yes, Lee KangYoon here."

– KangYoon-oppa? It's me, Lee HyunAh.

"HyunAh?"

It was Lee HyunAh from the band. He didn't tell her his number, though, KangYoon was confused.

– I asked for your number from the professor. I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't have done this....

“What’s up?”

Professor Choi wasn’t someone that would tell others his number so easily. So, if he did, there had to be a good reason for it.

– We passed the preliminaries for College Pop fest. I called you since I wanted to tell you quickly.

“Really? Congratulations. Did you really pass the preliminaries?”

KangYoon was honestly surprised. College Pop Festival was a competition where all sorts of talented young musicians competed from all over the country. There should have been numerous teams from all over the country, but they still passed. KangYoon was really surprised.

– I still can’t believe it. We were going to tell you if you came last week, but you didn’t. So, I thought I should give you a call.

“Really? Thanks for telling me. The finals.... Congratulations.”

– Thank you. I heard you were busy nowadays. But still, please make some time for the actual performance.

KangYoon said okay and finished the call.

‘That’s great. The finals, eh?’

A slight help resulted in the finals of the College Pop festival. KangYoon felt weird the more he thought about it.

Finishing his last cigarette, KangYoon headed not to his office but to L Hotel. This was the day he was going to showcase the girls in front of the company people and other related personnel.

“Welcome.”

Having arrived at the hotel, KangYoon was guided politely to the Crystal Room where the showcase would occur. There were already round tables for customers, and there was also a stage for the girls to perform on. Since it wasn’t time yet, there was no food on the table.

KangYoon headed to the waiting room where the girls were at.

“Huh? It’s ahju.... -der.”

“What the hell does that mean.”

Jung MinAh greeted KangYoon first. The girls were busy undergoing makeup. Since there were so many girls, they had called outside external makeup artists as well as bringing their own. From their hair to their costume, they were undergoing a full transformation. Next to them were high-heeled shoes that were asking to be worn.

“Ah, I’m nervous....”

When Seo HanYu spoke out, Christie An replied in a chic voice.

“That’s so not like you.”

“Sheesh, unni. Even I get nervous.”

“Lies, that invincible Seo HanYu gets nervous?”

The practice room was very noisy, but there was a strange tension in the air. KangYoon grabbed everyone’s attention and spoke calmly.

“We’re finally in orbit now. You’ve practiced hard until now, didn’t you?”

“Yes....”

“There will be a lot of people. From the people from our company to news reporters. Today’s matters will be sent out and many people will start talking about you.”

“.....”

Everyone became nervous after KangYoon said that. Being talked about by other people was a scary thing. Ailee Jung especially seemed to be scared as she was shivering slightly.

“We haven’t even debut yet, so it might be a little hard on you with many things going around. You may feel it’s a little cruel.

Why are they saying such things when we haven't even had our debut yet? You might want to swear at them. But from this moment onwards, it's real. I want you girls to accept reality as it is."

"....."

The girls all nodded their heads. The noisy atmosphere of before was completely gone. The heavy atmosphere pressured their shoulders.

At that time, Jung MinAh spoke.

"You'll always be on our side, won't you, ahjussi?"

"....."

"Right?"

Jung MinAh stared at KangYoon. No, it wasn't just her. Everyone was asking that with their eyes as well.

"Why are you asking the obvious?"

"Then that's fine. I know that you're stronger than a million anti-fans, ahjussi."

"How does that work? And stop calling me that."

"Ugh...."

The girls giggled thanks to Jung MinAh. Thanks to that the heavy atmosphere lightened in an instant. KangYoon was surprised to see such a side to Jung MinAh but was proud of her nonetheless. Though....

"Ouch!"

He did give her a smack.

"Oh my, Chairman."

"It's been a while, President Kang."

Calm music faintly flowed in the background, and Chairman Won JinMoon was greeting a big man. He was President Kang ShiMyoung of Yerang Entertainment, one of the four big management companies in Korea. Unlike Chairman Won JinMoon in his suit, he was wearing ripped jeans and a sleeveless T-shirt.

“Did you say it was EDDIOS? It seems like there’s a big interest in the kids this time. The fan club is considerably big even though they didn’t debut yet.”

“Hahaha. Let’s sit down first.”

Chairman Won JinMoon lead President Kang ShiMyoung to the seats. With the two seating together, not many people could approach them. However, there was someone who did.

“Haha, welcome. President Choo.”

President Choo ManJi politely greeted Chairman Won JinMoon and sat next to him. He was the president of yet another one of the four big management companies, Yoonseul. Unlike President Kang ShiMyoung, he had a skinny figure.

With three bigshots on one table, not many people tried to approach them. The vice-president of the final one of the 4 big management companies, GNB Entertainment, approached them and told them that the president was currently overseas and couldn’t attend this event and sat down and the atmosphere became even heavier.

With the tables being filled and the atmosphere running to its climax, the broadcast sounded out.

[Dear esteemed guests. The showcase of the new girl group, EDDIOS, from MG Entertainment will happen soon. Please be seated. I repeat....]

President Choo, who was conversing all this time, raised the glass of white wine.

“Chairman. I have high expectations for today.”

President Kang also spoke with a smile.

“I’m also looking forward to it. What kind of kids are they?”

Chairman Won JinMoon replied with a benevolent smile.

“Let’s not do this. Hey, it’s beginning.”

With his words, the surroundings darkened and the lights on the stage started being turned on one by one.

Chapter 59. First Appearance (2)

With a quiet applause, the six girls came up to the stage. After they got into a V-shaped formation, the AR started flowing out. KangYoon had judged that an AR was still better than an MR for the girls right now. (T/N: AR contains voices while MR is just the instruments)

With Jung MinAh at the center, the girls, wearing their heels, started dancing with vitality. Camera shutters could be heard and the important personnel from the industry also filmed their performance in secret with their phones and each focused on the stage in their own ways.

KangYoon, along with President Lee HyunJi was watching from the entrance of the Crystal Room.

“They’ve prepared a lot.”

President Lee HyunJi seemed to be surprised at the girl group’s energy and expressed her surprise.

There was naturally a machine-like synchro with each member.

The girls digested the violent movements even with their heels on. This made many surprised. KangYoon did make them practice hard after all.

However, KangYoon shook his head, saying that it was still far from okay.

“This is the AR version. Just this much won’t do.”

“You mean you’re going to do a live show with that kind of a dance? It won’t be easy you know.... JooAh may be able to do it.”

President Lee HyunJi felt that KangYoon was frightening.

There weren’t many singers that could digest both the dance and the singing on the stage.

No matter how hard he drove the girls, they should have a limit

though....

While KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi were talking about the girl group, President Choo ManJi approached them.

“Oh, HyunJi.”

He lightly received KangYoon’s nod-greeting and put his hand towards President Lee HyunJi.

“It’s been a while, President Choo.”

“Don’t call me that. Call me oppa like you did before.”

“This is a public place, President Choo ManJi.”

“You’re no fun. Fine. President Lee. How have you been?”

President Lee HyunJi finally grabbed his hand as well. While the girls’ magnificent performance continued, President Choo kept praising them.

“Amazing. Those girls must have prepared for 5 years at the least. You’ve got good members too. I can see a nice picture.”

“Thank you for the praise.”

“Wow, I’m amazed the more I look at them. So they are the ones that will take after Sereny.”

President Choo ManJi didn’t stop praising. Even while doing that, he was giving glances to President Lee HyunJi. However, President Lee HyunJi didn’t seem to realize that and didn’t say much. She realized that she shouldn’t leak many things here.

The girls’ song eventually ended. The people kept clapping, and the next song began. It was another AR. President Choo said some words of disappointment after seeing the stage.

“They’re good, but it’s a pity that I can’t hear them live. I do want to listen to their voices.”

“Live voice with that kind of dance routine is plain impossible. That performance with heels on and live singing? Forget about it.”

“Well, that’s true. But you know? Looking at this showcase, they look like they’re going to debut soon, no?”

President Choo was smiling. However, his smile contained something in it. KangYoon realized that he was trying to pry for information from President Lee HyunJi. Perhaps this was natural.

‘Choo ManJi. The president of Yunseul Entertainment. He’s a big shot that leads one of the four big entertainment companies in Korea. What is he intending?’

KangYoon wondered. This man was a daring and adventurous man. People usually considered him as someone reckless. However, he was, in fact, someone who was very calculative and had a smart head. KangYoon thought that he had a reason behind his question.

“A debut, you say? Do you go leaking company secrets everywhere, oppa?”

“Fu. That’s true. Sorry. I was in the wrong.”

When President Lee HyunJi became serious, he took a step back. However, KangYoon’s expression wasn’t that great. He saw him smiling for a brief moment.

‘He’s sure that we will debut soon. I don’t know what he’s aiming f... wait.’

Yunseul Entertainment also had a girl group that they had been preparing for a long time. They were named Diateen and debuted almost at the same time as EDDIOS. In KangYoon’s previous life, EDDIOS had a huge failure when they started off, and the reason lay in the fact that they were continuously compared with Diateen.

‘Diateen actually debuted on the same stage as EDDIOS didn’t they? They were much more popular at the beginning too. Though, they gave the throne to EDDIOS due to various scandals and blanks. Looks like I should be wary.’

Thinking of his previous life, KangYoon was wary against

President Choo ManJi. Although he was altering the future, there were many things that weren't affected by him yet. No, it was instead more possible that something completely unexpected may happen due to his actions until now. KangYoon kept being calm.

“May I say something?”

When KangYoon was about to say something, President Choo ManJi didn't hide his displeasure.

“President Lee. I don't think that employee of yours over there can read the mood properly.”

President Lee HyunJi backlashed quite hard when she heard those rude words.

“Really? You'll regret it though.”

“President Lee. Only those of the same social status should talk to each other in public places like this. This isn't right.”

KangYoon was disdained outright, but he waited quietly. He already knew that President Choo was someone who was strong against the weak and weak against the strong. However, KangYoon had confidence in not being disdained in this place.

And as he had expected, President Lee HyunJi put a mocking smile on.

“President Choo. Have you heard of the name ‘Lee KangYoon’?”

“Lee KangYoon? Of course, I do. He's the hottest topic among guys like us. From JooAh to Sedy, SeasonS and TheAce.... Oh, yeah, didn't he come today? I actually wanted to see him the most.”

“Well, he was trying to talk to you.” (T/N: Savage.)

President Choo ManJi became both panicked and confused at once. KangYoon almost burst out laughing when he tried to look around, and President Lee HyunJi just dumped that line on him. He didn't know she had such sarcasm in her. However, that was

only for a moment, KangYoon indifferently spoke.

“Greetings. I am Lee KangYoon. I am currently working as the General Planning Team Leader in MG Entertainment.”

“.....”

President Choo ManJi was rendered speechless. He was rude to the man he called ‘the hottest person among guys like them’. He was embarrassed.

‘Dammit....’

He coughed continuously and left the place saying he’d go to the toilet. President Lee HyunJi and KangYoon burst out laughing after hearing that.

“Lol. Being with Team leader Lee like this can bring such joyous surprises.”

“I also didn’t know I would have fun like this. I also didn’t know President Choo was someone like that.”

“Well, he does give proper treatment to the people who deserve it. He’s publicly known as a great man, but actually, he’s not much....”

President Lee HyunJi shook her head. KangYoon immediately realized what she meant.

Some time had passed, and the girls’ performance was nearing its end. The energetic dance routine eventually faded out and the white light that only KangYoon could see also started dissipating.

“Thank you!”

The girls’ stage ended and was followed by an applause. The people gave claps without holding back. KangYoon also clapped towards the girls as well.

“Should we go around greeting people then? Follow me.”

“Okay.”

KangYoon started walking around the Crystal Room to greet the other people along with President Lee HyunJi.

The girls who finished their showers in the hotel shower room immediately ran to the Crystal Room. The room was already prepared with meals for them to enjoy.

“Wow~!”

From some unheard-of steak to various other luxury foods made them drool. They ran to the tables and cut the meat into pieces with their mouths knives.to eat.

Jung MinAh found KangYoon when she was about to feast. He was currently greeting ‘high’ ranking people along with President Lee HyunJi.

‘Ugh....’

No matter how she admired KangYoon, that kind of an iron castle wasn’t so easy to breach. She swallowed her tears and turned around to the meat again. However, an opportunity soon came.

‘Huh?’

KangYoon separated from President Lee HyunJi and walked off somewhere. Having found her opportunity, Jung MinAh also stood up.

“Hey, where are you going?”

“Poop.”

“Do you mind? We’re eating here.”

Jung MinAh stuck her tongue out to Christie An to tease her once and headed to the corridor following KangYoon.

KangYoon wasn’t far away.

“Ahju....”

However, KangYoon wasn’t alone. He was with a large man with

ripped jeans on. Jung MinAh was curious about what they were talking about and quietly approached them.

“I’ve really enjoyed what you’ve done today. EDDIOS, was it? They were great.”

“Thank you for your praise.”

The big man was President Kang ShiMyoung of Yerang Entertainment. He gave a business card to KangYoon and showed him good will.

“I think you’ve prepared for a long time. They’re definitely slightly different from what our company strives for, but I think they’ll become great singers.”

“I’m only thankful that you’re praising me so much. I’m still not that good yet.”

“Not at all. I was honestly surprised. Mr. KangYoon, oh, can I call you that?”

“Yes.”

“I was honestly surprised at what you produced Mr. KangYoon. From the party-like showcase, and the contents as well. Everything was so novel. I even felt like you did this to crush us all.”

“Hahaha.”

KangYoon only laughed. However, he was inwardly wary about what this man was thinking. Most compliments came with strings attached.

And just as he had expected, he switched to the real topic after giving him the business card.

“It’s my business card.”

“Why are you....”

“Although not yet, you might see a need for it in the future. Please call me then. I’ll have the doors open anytime.”

He didn't say a lot. However, he was pretty clear in his intentions. KangYoon also expressed his intentions after realizing what the opponent said to him.

"I apologize, but I...."

"I know. That you're currently satisfied with your place."

"....."

"However, no one knows what may happen in the future. You might need it someday. After all, the future is unknown. Please keep it for then."

He wasn't wrong; and since it was wrong to just throw away the business card, KangYoon put the business card inside his wallet. There was no need to reply with malice to goodwill.

"Then I'll look forward to EDDIOS's actions in the future."

After his business was over, he walked down the corridor. His presence was big just like his stature. When KangYoon took out the business card to take a look, Jung MinAh suddenly appeared in front of him. KangYoon was surprised and hid the business card.

"Ah! Oh, MinAh, it's you."

"Yes, it's me. Ahjussi, that...."

"Did you see?"

"...Yes, it was a coincidence though."

Jung MinAh honestly said that she had seen everything. KangYoon also didn't lie.

"Keep it a secret."

"Just like that?"

"...Don't play around here."

"Tch. Fine."

When KangYoon became serious, Jung MinAh grumbled and said

yes. When she pouted, KangYoon also gave her the carrot.

“I’ll treat you.”

“...Fried pork from Jung Mumoon.”

“I’ll add a yangjang-pi as well.”

“Yay!”

KangYoon was very generous when he treated someone. Jung MinAh shouted hooray.

The showcase ended, and he finally found some time.

KangYoon headed to Hallyeo Arts University. When he arrived at the practice room in the underground floor of the student council building, the band, Recovery, was absorbed in practice with beads of sweat dripping down their faces

– I am by your-side – opening the sails of hope—

When KangYoon opened the door, Lee HyunAh’s voice strongly provoked his ears. Her voice was a complete 180 from the previous unmotivated tone. The low bass resounded along with the drums and made KangYoon’s heart thump along with the rhythm as well.

KangYoon put the snacks he brought on the chair and sat next to Professor Choi ChanYang.

– My tears flow-in the violent wind—but when it stopped, I met you –

Professor Choi was also moving his shoulders in accordance with the music. He was also in the mood because they were now in the finals. Well, it wasn’t just him, everyone was. The practice was very hard, but everyone was full of energy.

The song ended and everyone put down their instruments.

“Thank you!”

Everyone lowered their head towards KangYoon. They still

thought that Lee HyunAh's score was KangYoon's. KangYoon was the one who gave them the opportunity to enter the College Pop Festival finals.

“Ahaha....”

“Hyung-nim! We'll do our best.”

Goo HyungSeok energetically bowed towards KangYoon. Moon MiYoung and Kim HeeJin also said that they would do anything for him. Of course, KangYoon didn't intend to do anything like that. He looked towards Lee HyunAh, but she only shook her head. KangYoon felt awkward for taking credit for another's work.

After a moment of rest, the practice began again. Everyone was in the Composition department, but this piece was at the level of professional bands. The most emphasized was Lee HyunAh. Going beyond characteristic, her voice had a charm.

KangYoon saw the musical notes that came out from everyone and focused on Lee HyunAh.

‘The light trembles whenever Lee HyunAh's notes are added into the mix.’

KangYoon knew exactly what was happening. The light from the band, Recovery, was definitely strong. He didn't know what the other bands in the College Pop Festival were like, but he did think that they were fine to expect good results with this level.

Their practice continued late into the night. KangYoon also wanted to stay, but he had to leave early because of his job. Professor Choi also left with KangYoon saying that he had some materials to prepare for class.

The two headed to the station together.

“The kids are doing well now.”

“It's all thanks to you. HyunJi did say that nothing's impossible with you, but now I think I know the reason.”

“Haha....”

KangYoon was embarrassed every time he heard words like these. Professor Choi continued speaking.

“I actually know everything.”

“Sorry?”

“The score that you gave to the students, was actually composed by HyunAh, wasn’t it?”

KangYoon silently smiled in acknowledgment.

“I noticed from the handwriting. There’s no way you would steal a student’s work so.... I asked HyunAh later. So, you stepped up instead of her because she couldn’t do it.”

“It was just that she did well. That’s all.”

“But it was you that showed it to everyone else. Though short, I think I saw a fragment of the power of a planner. Indirectly make the others do what you intended. So, planners were such cool beings.”

KangYoon felt awkward at Professor Choi’s compliment. Professor Choi bought a drink on the way and asked him to stay friends with the students at the Composition department.

Having arrived at the station, the two waited for the bus. When the bus was in sight, Professor Choi stood up from his seat.

“The College Pop Festival will begin soon. Will you be able to come?”

“I’ll try to make some time. But honestly... I don’t know how things will go.”

“Please try to make some time. Well. Then....”

He separated from Professor Choi and headed to the subway station himself.

Busy days began again.

After the showcase, it was a countdown to the debut. The girls also kicked the practice up a notch and the company activated emergency protocols. KangYoon's work time also increased and ran late into the night.

“Let's end it here for today.”

KangYoon finished a meeting with the planning team that topped the PR team as the busiest team recently and headed to his office. Although he went home late every night, today was slightly different.

He left the company like an arrow and immediately headed to the sports field of D University where the College Pop Festival was held.

— Yaiyai—

When KangYoon arrived at D University, he could already hear the music.

“Oh... Am I too late?”

Fortunately, the taxi dropped him somewhere nearby so he didn't have to walk that far. He called Professor Choi while walking to ask where they were and immediately headed over there.

“Huh? Hyung-nim!”

“Oppa!”

When he rushed to the waiting room, everyone gladly met KangYoon. Everyone seemed to be surprised at KangYoon with a suit on unlike usual.

“Wow, you guys look great.”

Said KangYoon when he saw everyone undergoing makeup. KangYoon focused especially on Lee HyunAh, who even had makeup on her eyes unlike her usual simple and light makeup.

“Your eyes are done greatly. Did you do it yourself?”

“No, MiYoung-unni did it for me.”

Moon MiYoung drew a V with her fingers. She felt proud of her makeup skills on their youngest one.

KangYoon didn't have much to do there so he left after a simple greeting. Just as he was about to find an empty seat for himself, someone tugged on his sleeve. He turned around to see that it was Lee HyunAh.

“HyunAh. What is it?”

“Uh.... I came here to say thanks.”

“Like this?”

“.....”

KangYoon's light joke made her bright red. KangYoon found her cute and laughed.

“Hahaha, I was joking. How is it? Are you nervous?”

“...It would be a lie to say that I'm not.”

“You are nervous, eh? What do we do about that.... Oh, why don't we do this?”

KangYoon also pondered for a moment before speaking.

“I'm going to be at the front, so, sing while looking only at me. What do you think?”

“Pffft!”

She burst out laughing since that was absurd. They were not lovers, what was all this about. KangYoon laughed along with her.

“How is it? Did that relieve some of your nervousness?”

“I'm not sure about that, we're not lovers either.... What the heck was that? Are you trying to seduce me?”

“Nah, I don't think jail is a nice place. Anyway, stages aren't

something that amazing. Don't lose to your heart, okay?"

KangYoon patted her shoulders and headed to the audience seat.

'Don't lose to my heart?'

She didn't know what it meant but kept those words in mind anyway. She somehow felt that she needed those words right now.

"Mr. HyunJin. I was eating gimbap the other day and I couldn't rip a piece out. Do you know why?"

"Because the gimbap was made from Dol-gim(stone seaweed)?"

"....."

While the presenters continued the stage with cold jokes, the next band was preparing. The instruments were connected to the amplifiers, while drums were set into position as well, and synthesizers were being set.

"Then how about this? What do you call a king when he falls over?"

"King Kong." (T/N: Kong is a sound effect for falling here)

"....."

"Ehem."

The presenters Yang HyunJin and Joo MinGuk received a sign that the next team was ready while they were exchanging cold jokes.

"So, they're ready now. It was hard."

Grumbled Joo MinGuk lightly. Then Yang HyunJin replied as well.

"I had it harder. Well, let's stop this and can you please introduce them?"

"Yes. It's our next team. Every member of this team are actually

composers. It's the band Recovery from Hallyeo Arts University. Everyone, please give a round of applause!"

The cameras all filmed the stage. The lights went on and Recovery's stage began with four beats from the drums.

Chapter 60. The Thread Left By The College Pop Festival

Lee HyunAh relaxed and went up to the stage. However, after opening her eyes after grabbing the microphone, she could see the audience seats filled with people. She shrunk back after receiving the attention of so many.

‘It’s completely different from the rehearsal.’

People cheering with glowing sticks, people shouting along with their children. The young people looked like they wanted to jump around already. Everything was happening around her. Everyone was looking at her, Lee HyunAh. She subconsciously gulped.

When she stiffened up in nervousness, the drum beats sounded from behind her. Along with that, the instruments began playing with a slide from the bass.

‘It’s too early.’

KangYoon felt a sense of haste from the leader Min ChanMin. In his view, Lee HyunAh still wasn’t ready yet, but it seemed like Min ChanMin didn’t see Lee HyunAh properly. As he had feared, Lee HyunAh waved her hand towards the back and halted the music.

“Sorry.”

Lee HyunAh apologized to the audience and the judges. Although it was alright to stop since she didn’t even start singing yet, the audience and the judges didn’t seem to like it. At the front, people were saying that the fun had left while people at the back were urging her to start. With similar gazes from everywhere, she felt like she was going crazy. Everyone was pressuring her.

But at that time, she saw KangYoon, who was sitting in the front seats. He was holding up a sketchbook from god-knows-where he got it. There were two words written on it.

[It's fine]

But somehow, KangYoon's words magically made her calm. It was the comfort of feeling that there was someone on her side within this crowd that pressured her. Lee HyunAh matched eyes with KangYoon and spoke comfortably.

“Ahh.... Sorry about that. Let's start.”

It was a short amount of time but was long to the audience that was waiting for it. Unlike the beginning, the atmosphere was already cooling down. However, she did not care about it. Her gaze was fixed on KangYoon alone.

When Lee HyunAh's ready signal came, the drums started off with four beats and the bass slid. The clear sound of the guitar and the synthesizer hopped onto the heavy bass rhythm.

– I am by your side – like this – putting the sails of hope—

Lee HyunAh's powerful voice was the icing on the cake. The disappointed crowd started raising their gears again. When the cheers got louder, her singing also became more powerful.

– The rough winds – make my tears flow—but stopped when I met you –

The distortion from the electric guitar and the low tone from the bass harmonized and decorated her singing even more magnificently. The sound of the guitar that lightly crumpled to bring out the mood was making her singing even more vivid. The drums that beat on the on-beat was fixing the beats on the spot.

‘The atmosphere is good. Too bad the lighting isn't up to par.’

Judged KangYoon as he watched the strong white light made from the musical notes. He knew that Lee HyunAh's gaze was fixed on him so he was still holding up the sketchbook. Some people glanced at him, but he didn't take it down for fear of affecting the stage.

– Like this—engrave in your heart – I love – you – and hope to my heart –

The song started nearing its climax. The guitar also turned to high pitch to excite the audience even further. The college students were already jumping around at the front, and the back-seat audience were also clapping. KangYoon was sure of the stage's success after seeing the white light getting stronger.

– With hope – together –

Min ChanMin made a flashy drum improvisation, while the electric guitar went to the highest possible range of pitch and the people's cheers neared the peak as well. Lee HyunAh's voice ruled the stage. Seeing Recovery's light seeping into the entire venue, KangYoon quietly clapped.

“Thank you!”

“Whaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!”

The beautiful music died down, and when Lee HyunAh's goodbyes were over, the cheers from the audience saw them out. The cooled atmosphere from the beginning had completely disappeared without a trace.

The College Pop Festival ended.

The band with the most cheers was without a doubt, Recovery, but the initial preparation time became a problem and the Grand Prize was given to some other participants. There were some members of the audience that were confused, but the judges said that all evaluations were fair.

Recovery received bronze. However, the camera flashes were most concentrated on them. KangYoon thought about greeting and congratulating them, but turned around after seeing so many reporters gathered around them. He didn't wish to be caught up with reporters in something other than work.

He was slowly walking out of the venue when someone grabbed him from the back. When he turned around in surprise, it was Lee HyunAh.

“HyunAh, you... What about the interview?”

“That’s not my type thing. So I ran away.”

“.....”

KangYoon was flabbergasted. The College Pop Festival was a big competition, perhaps enough to change her life. She had just received the bronze prize but ran away from the interviews.... It seemed like this girl was not an ordinary one.

“Go back quickly. What are you doing....”

“Thank you.”

Before KangYoon could say anything, she deeply bowed.

“Without you, I would not have participated in such a competition, not to mention receiving a prize. I’ll give the trophy to you, oppa.”

She held out the trophy that had the words ‘Bronze prize of the 30th College Pop Festival’. However, KangYoon shook his head.

“There’s no reason for me to receive this.”

“You made me sing my song, and even relieved my nervousness today. Please receive it.”

“It’s because you were good.”

KangYoon kept refusing. He didn’t like receiving such a precious trophy like this. However, she kept urging, and in the end, resorted to tears. KangYoon had to accept the trophy.

“Don’t you need to give such a thing to your family?”

“I already took photos with them, so it’s fine.”

His final defense line crumbled as well. In the end, KangYoon said something while receiving it.

“Come to me to get it back later.”

“You should just receive it. Now you want me to get it back?”

“Ask me to give it to you when you think you became an upright person. I’ll give it back to you with interest.”

“With interest? Wow.”

She immediately accepted after hearing the word ‘interest’.

KangYoon grumbled while putting the trophy into his bag.

“Then see you later. Congratulations on getting bronze.”

“Thank you!”

Watching KangYoon going off as he waved his hand, she waved her hand until his figure completely disappeared.

The biggest event for examinees, the college scholastic ability test, was arriving when the weather became colder. The jumpers worn by the students became thicker and scarves started making their appearance.

However, the girls’ practice room was instead getting hotter. The heat from the girls was more eye-catching due to the cold practice room. Their figures in the mirrors were like half-burnt wood.

“Ah, it’s so hot.”

Grumbled Jung MinAh with her cleavage wide open. She was covered in sweat due to the vicious movements.

“What the hell is up with your clothes?”

“It’s fine because I have the figure. You should wear it too. It’s much cooler.”

“.....”

Jung MinAh replied with a faint disdain to Han JooYeon’s words. When Han JooYeon became dejected, Seo HanYu consoled her, but

Jung MinAh gave a glance to her ‘that place’. Han JooYeon’s head lowered even more.

The doors to the practice room suddenly opened when the girls were enjoying their brief rest. It was KangYoon with some papers.

“Kyaaaaak!”

However, his ears were terrorized as soon as he came in. When KangYoon saw, he saw Jung MinAh in a pink tank-top that showed her abdomen.

“What the hell?”

“So suddenly...! Get out!”

The clothes had a healthy beauty but KangYoon turned around to the other girls without paying much attention.

“Sheesh, I thought you were in underwear or something. Hey, hey, attention. Can you girls please sit for a moment?”

Everyone giggled after seeing Jung MinAh being ignored by KangYoon. Han JooYeon especially so. Jung MinAh, who was ignored outright put her clothes on in the corner while shaking and sat down.

“You have practiced a lot, haven’t you?”

“Yes.”

“I came here today for an important announcement. There are two and the first is that your debut date is now official.”

The usually energetic girls all became calmer. The word debut had that much power.

“You’ll debut in ‘Music Count’ in K Cable TV station. There will be two songs. You just need to practice the two you were doing until now. I’ll tell you the detailed schedule through the managers.”

“Yes.”

He could feel nervousness and excitement from the girls. This nervousness was different from the showcase. They were finally seeing the fruits of 1 year of preparation. Everyone's hearts were thumping.

“And second, we'll go on a trip.”

“Huh? A trip?”

Jung MinAh asked as their representative to the sudden question.

“The place will be Los Angeles, United States. You can consider this as the last trip as trainees before your debut. There's nothing you need to prepare especially. The company will take care of all the expenses. You just need to enjoy your time there.”

“Yay!”

A trip to a foreign country? It was amazing that they were becoming singers from trainees, but they were presented trips to America! All the girls cheered out. No one could believe that there was so much support for just trainees.

“The schedule will be....”

KangYoon handed out the papers in his hand. There were detailed schedules along with the mention that they would go 3 weeks before their debut for one week. Of course, this was possible only because all of them had passports.

Seeing the girls full of excitement at the sudden trip to America, KangYoon quietly left.

‘Although there was quite a big budget, this much should be fine.’

Funds for a trip? It was really controversial when it was approved. However, he pushed it through, saying that they had to see many things now to put a foundation for the many areas they might work in in the future. Of course, one part of the reason was

that KangYoon had already leaked that he would nitpick the directors' large business trip budget.

When KangYoon went up to his office and sat in front of his desk, his phone rang. It was a message from Lee HyunAh.

– oppa, you busy? ^. ^

– yep

Replied KangYoon. However, he got a call instead.

– Oppa, it's me. HyunAh.

“What's up?”

– I called since I was nearby. Are you very busy?

“I do have a lot of work to do.”

There were mountains of paperwork awaiting his approval on his desk.

– Oh, really? I gave you a call since it was lunchtime...

When KangYoon looked at the clock, it was indeed lunchtime.

“You want to have lunch together?”

– Yes. I'll treat you.

He didn't have a reason to refuse a free lunch. KangYoon took his wallet and stood up from his seat.

Lee HyunAh was at a gamja-tang restaurant near MG Entertainment.

“I'm here.”

The gamja-tang started boiling when KangYoon sat down. It was her wits of having ordered beforehand. Since KangYoon was hungry, KangYoon started his meal and ate one portion in a flash.

After the meal, she calmly spoke up.

“Oppa, I left Recovery.”

KangYoon was slightly surprised. They received a bronze and she quit? He was curious about the reason.

“I thought a lot about it. I thought that there would be a lot of things if I stayed... but those oppas and unnis are quite strict. They never listen to me either.”

“Don’t you think you need to at least try convincing them first?”

“Well, I don’t have the ability to.”

She drew the line there. KangYoon judged that he wasn’t someone that should interject here and kept listening to her words.

“I also consulted with the professor, and he told me that it should be fine for me to meet other music and musicians. He told me that I have a good voice and a good sense for composing, and staying in Recovery may instead be detrimental for me.”

“That’s a difficult problem.”

“Well, I did get to find out that my song actually works. So I thought I’d try some other place this time.”

“Where?”

“Hongdae.” (T/N: AKA Hongik university district)

KangYoon was surprised at her words. Hongdae was referred to as the holy place of indie bands, as well as a place where many manias gathered. There were a considerable number of singers that were scouted from there and were now on TV.

“It won’t be easy, you know?”

“I’m fine with it. I’m still young, am I not?”

“That’s true, I guess.”

“I came here to hear you say ‘go for it’ before I do.”

KangYoon understood what she was thinking. Although she sounded like she had decided already, she was still inwardly worried.

‘Can Lee HyunAh succeed in Hongdae?’

KangYoon pondered for a moment. Strictly speaking, the band, Recovery, could not be considered a good band. With that being the case, the good voice and the good music would be the reason for getting 3rd place in the College Pop Festival. Potential? She definitely had it.

Having organized his thoughts, KangYoon spoke calmly.

“You’ll do well.”

“Really?”

She asked again. KangYoon didn’t hesitate and repeated himself.

“Of course.”

“Right?”

Lee HyunAh smiled at KangYoon’s answer.

“Wooooooooooooow!”

Getting off the van, the girls shouted as soon as they saw the airport. Numerous foreigners and people with huge carrier bags, as well as police with guns – everything was new to them.

“Everyone quiet.”

The leader of the management team, Han TaeHyoung, cautioned them. He currently felt as if he had become a teacher at an all-girls high school. Behind him were managers Kim JiHyun and Kim SeHyui, and the rookie Im TaeGoon, who were following the girls with lots of luggage in their hands.

Although holiday season was past, the airport was filled with people in November. KangYoon had a busy time himself. KangYoon had to take care of the flight procedures for the girls while they were enjoying their time.

Then, everyone entered the duty-free shops.

“It’s a new world....”

Jung MinAh became absent-minded after seeing the numerous lines of shops. The endless chains of conveyor belts, as well as blond foreigners and the electronic violin at the entrance, was all new to her.

“Country girl, hurry up.” (T/N: Spoken in English)

Christie An urged Jung MinAh on who was still absent-minded and was standing still. However, she was still frozen stiff. In the end, Seo HanYu dragged her on.

“It’s a new world.... A completely new world.”

“Unni, get yourself together.”

Seo HanYu was also curious about the new things around her, but she followed the managers. Even while the unnis were looking at bags and clothes, she didn’t get side-tracked.

KangYoon seemed to understand what they were thinking and spoke with a smile.

“There’s still 3 hours until the flight so let’s have some free time for 2 hours. We’ll meet up in front of gate 121.”

“Yes!”

The girls split up into threes and started wandering around. Of course, he didn’t forget to tell the managers to quietly tail them. Since the members were revealed to the internet, he had to prepare for the what-if scenarios.

Everyone left and KangYoon was left alone. He took out a book he had brought. It was a book on harmonics.

‘So that’s how I solve it.’

To create the miracle of turning tadpoles into musical notes, KangYoon did not let go of the book from his hand.

The two hours passed by quite quickly.

The girls gathered and the managers returned as well. The girls seemed to be satisfied with all the eye-shopping they did. Of course, they couldn't actually buy anything. Branded products were still out of their reach.

– Flight XX to Los Angeles will begin. Customers at gate 121....

The boarding announcement finally came. KangYoon and the others boarded the flight with their tickets.

Like that, everyone headed to America.

Chapter 61. In America

– Recruiting members for a band.

Recruiting members

– Drums

– Bass

– Guitar

– Synthesizer

And up to 5 other people. (I'm the vocalist.)

I have a song in mind. I'll consult you when the members are decided.

Not restricted by genre.

* Seoul residents welcome! (It doesn't matter where!)

* I hope that you can use an instrument and possibly own one too!

Please call 010-XXXX-XXXX for details~≡

Lee HyunAh put up flyers by herself on the streets of Hongdae. Some people received the posters from herself. She approached and handed out those flyers to some of the performers on the street and those who had instruments on their backs. She did her best to recruit members for a band.

She handed out flyers from dawn till eve, but at the end of the day, her phone was silent.

Lee HyunAh sat down absent-mindedly on one of the streets. Since she had to walk around all day, she felt pretty tired. There were some that wanted her signature, but she felt disappointed because she couldn't get them to react to the band recruitment.

When she was looking around the street performances, a burly man approached her.

“Excuse me, you’re the one that handed out these right?”

In his hand was one of the flyers.

“Yes, yes.”

“I play the bass. Can I have a listen to your song?”

“Of course!”

Lee HyunAh immediately stood up with energy and lead the man to a nearby café.

After over 10 hours of flight, KangYoon and the others finally arrived at LA international airport in America. Everyone seemed to be affected by the long hours of flight while they were going through the procedures for entry. Just as everyone left immigration, Ailee Jung saw someone and ran towards him.

“Papa!”

Before anyone could say to her, she was hugged by someone.

“Ailee!”

“Papa!”

The girls were surprised, but KangYoon knew who this man was. He was the father of Ailee Jung. He left the girls and approached the man to greet him. Following that, everyone introduced themselves and followed after him. From today onwards, everyone was going to stay at Ailee’s house.

KangYoon got onboard the car that Ailee’s father drove along with her. The other girls boarded a rental car.

“It should have been a difficult request.... Thanks for accepting it, Team leader.”

“Not at all. Rather, it’s us who’s thankful for reducing the

budget.”

KangYoon declined his appreciation. The decisive reason they could come to America this time was due to this. Ailee Jung’s father paid for all residential fees, and the budget for the stay went down considerably.

“Papa, aren’t we using too much money?”

“It’s fine. It’s all to see Ailee once more.”

“Papa!”

“.....”

While a soap opera played out between the father and daughter, Jung MinAh was getting Han JooYeon’s heavy bag out.

‘Jung MinAh changed a lot.’

Before, she was someone who only tried to win against others, but now, she started being considerate to her colleagues. KangYoon felt proud of her.

The group arrived at Ailee’s house after many hours of driving. Her house was at the edge of LA. Although it was relatively small, it was large enough for them to all stay in, it also had a garden as well, and even a pool. Everyone was flabbergasted after seeing the scale of the house rarely seen in Korea.

After they unpacked their luggage and washed up, it was nighttime already. The girls were full of excitement since it was the first day of the travel, but they all fell asleep without being able to win against jetlag.

Second day.

KangYoon headed to the theme park where characters from various animations walked around. It was one of the most well-known theme parks in the world.

“Uaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“Kyyyyyyyyyaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Having gotten on a roller coaster for the first time in his life, KangYoon screamed his life out. Jung MinAh was in a similar situation by his side.

“They’re practically the same.”

Below the roller coaster, Christie An was shaking her head.

“Wasn’t that great?”

“That was fun?”

After around 2 minutes on the roller coaster, KangYoon had to stagger his way out being supported by Jung MinAh. Not only the girls, even the managers giggled after seeing him.

Rides were the best things in theme parks. Everyone enjoyed their preferred rides and leisure time. KangYoon never approached any ride after that roller coaster. Jung MinAh grumbled, saying he was so weak despite being a man, but he didn’t care.

The day was passing by fast. When the energetic girls conquered almost all the rides, the sun was setting.

“Should we go back then?”

Everyone was disappointed, but the girls still followed him out.

Most of their schedule in America was leisure and travel. The girls were worried that they might have to study or perform, but there was nothing like that. Other than the fact that everyone had to be together, it was no different from touring. Everyone admired and enjoyed this life that was completely different from Korea.

One day before they had to go back to Korea.

KangYoon held out tickets to the girls.

“What are these?”

When Jung MinAh asked, it was instead Christie who answered for KangYoon.

“Duh, they’re tickets. Can’t you see?”

“Yes, I can’t see. Wanna fight?”

Jung MinAh and Christie An were about to quarrel again but KangYoon calmed them down with a smack on their heads.

“It’s always me....”

“We’re going to see Samuel Johnson’s concert today. I won’t ask you to write a report, but I will ask for your opinions. Okay?”

“Yeeees.”

Jung MinAh answered in a bland tone, but KangYoon simply ignored her. When she drew circles on the ground for being ignored, all the girls giggled.

‘That’s comical.’

Even while playing around with the girls, KangYoon was watching the relationships between each of them. From the soft Seo HanYu to the funny yet considerate Lee SamSoon to the nagging, but sturdy Ailee Jung – he was watching everyone.

The girls left the house with KangYoon and headed for the concert venue.

“Wow, there are soooooo many people.....”

Han JooYeon shivered slightly after seeing the crowd that filled the giant concert hall. No, it was more appropriate to say that she was overwhelmed. The concert venue centered around a stage and every inch were filled with people.

“It can apparently house 50 thousand people so yeah.”

“F, fifty thousand!?”

Even Seo HanYu, who wasn’t easily surprised, was shocked. When they looked around, they would see crowds upon crowds of people. She couldn’t believe that all of these people came to see just one singer.

Everyone grabbed their seats. The girls were staring at the entrances as there was an endless stream of people coming in. They found it curious that such an enormous hall was going to be filled.

“Team leader. What kind of singer are we going to watch today?”

Asked Jung MinAh, who sat next to KangYoon.

“Samuel Johnson. The greatest pop singer of the 80s. Of course, he’s still one of the greatest singers. Haven’t you heard about him?”

“Oh, I did. The lean dance and the moonwalk!” (T/N: We all know who this is now)

“Correct. The reason that he’s famous is because most singers at that time just danced according to the rhythm of the song while they sang. But Samuel Johnson was the first one to dance along with singing. He’s a pioneer, per se.”

“Oh, stages didn’t have dances until now?”

Jung MinAh perked her ears up after listening to something she hadn’t known before. KangYoon found that cute and continued.

“To be exact, dancing and singing were entirely separate. But with the appearance of Samuel Johnson, ‘performance’ properly came onto the stage along with singing. Other than that, the current stage devices, music videos and stuff like that, which affected the music history as a whole, also came from him. Now you see why he’s called the greatest singer right?”

“Wow, that’s amazing. Oh, the lights are going off.”

The stage was about to start and the lights went off. After that, numbers started appearing on the huge screen in front of the stage. It was decreasing from the number 10, and the audience all shouted out.

....

“Five!”

“Four!”

....

The audience was very dynamic. The girls also shouted the countdown as well. The number soon became 1, then 0. And the cheers of the audience erupted along with a loud boom.

“Woowooooow!”

Along with the cheers, the lights came on the stage. And on the stage....

‘Huh?’

No one was there. The audience that was cheering and the girls all looked around to see what was happening.

‘What’s happening?’

KangYoon wondered if there was an accident or something. Just as the 50,000 audience was about to fall into the same suspicion, a humanoid hologram appeared with a few beeps. It was the hologram of Samuel Johnson. The hologram extracted bits of the performances he had shown in the past and showed it to the audience. The music became faster and the mood was heightened, and the almost panic-stricken audience was instantly taken away by it.

The drum sounds became louder before the hologram vaporized into thin air. Just as the people were about to fall into panic again, pillars of fire rose from the surroundings before someone appeared from below the stage. Along with that figure, 2 more holograms of Samuel Johnson appeared.

“Woowooooooooooooooooooooooooow! Samuel! Samuel!”

The one from below was the real Samuel. As the two holograms and he joined into one, he started taking away the attention of all the people there.

“It’s quiet without KangYoon here.”

Chairman Won JinMoon was in KangYoon’s empty office. Behind him was President Lee HyunJi.

“Definitely, his bold attitude isn’t here.”

“Do you feel that way too?”

It had been 4 days since KangYoon took the girls to America. He felt bored without the results from KangYoon.

“How’s the concert team doing? I’m worried since he’s only focusing on the girl group right now.”

“Phew....”

Although she shouldn’t act like this in front of the chairman, President Lee HyunJi deeply sighed. Even though she wanted to take a big job, with KangYoon away, she couldn’t do anything.

“Please wait for a little. I’ll send him your way as soon as they debut.”

“Understood. But I think the end-of-year concert will be difficult.”

“Oh well. I’ll be considerate next time.”

President Lee HyunJi emphasized that the matters like what happened with JooAh last time must not happen again. He added while signing the document.

“But you know? Isn’t it a pity to just leave KangYoon in the concert team? I think he’ll do well in other things too.”

“He’s learning music theory as well.”

“That’s not enough.”

Chairman Won JinMoon wasn’t satisfied. He fidgeted with his pen for a moment before clapping as though he had come to a realization.

“The word ‘concert team’ sounds fine, but I think it will be better for him to do various work about music and not just concerts. We’ll raise KangYoon in the process, and it’ll profit the company in the long run too. Isn’t that two birds with one stone?”

“Are you referring to a general business team related to music?”

“Something like that. We’ll create a team with professional members, too. I knew I could count on you.”

“I’ll look into it.”

Replied President Lee HyunJi with confidence.

She judged that this had potential after evaluating KangYoon’s sense in music as well as his ability to gather people’s opinions together.

Samuel’s stage kept going.

Even Jung MinAh and Lee SamSoon, who were clueless about English, started being absorbed by the performances that contained a story. Samuel’s stage contained extremes of magnificence, but also, each song had their stories as well. Not just his lyrics, his performance, and his light were portraying those stories.

Seeing numerous musical notes combining into one blinding white light, KangYoon couldn’t hide his exclamation. The scene of that light seeping into the audience was a spectacle. The machine-like precision of 30 people dancing and the harmony was a beautiful scene that he may not be able to see again.

“.....”

Jung MinAh was already captivated. It didn’t matter if she spoke a different language. She couldn’t forget the 30-people dancing completely in sync. 30 people of both genders doing one action was a piece of art.

[This, will be the final song.]

Samuel Johnson wiped the sweat on his forehead. Everyone expressed their disappointment, but he only made his soft smile unique to him.

[I wish everyone could be with me on this one.]

He calmed himself down and took off the headset. Then, he grabbed the microphone that the staff gave him. Behind the stage, a house band music flossed out and a children's choir humming started emphasizing the instruments.

– Make – our world – a better place –

And it harmonized with Samuel Johnson's unique voice. The audience, who was cheering until now, reacted by waving their hands in midair this time. KangYoon and the girls also did the same.

Samuel Johnson closed his eyes and fell into the music. The song was sung comfortably as though telling a story. The bold melody quietly flowed out, but there was the amazing message of 'you are one that heals the world'.

Perhaps due to that message, an amazing scene started unfolding in KangYoon's vision.

'Gold light!?'

The musical notes from the instruments and the choir were emitting white light, and with Samuel's voice added into it, it started turning into gold. At first, the white light was tinged with gold, but by now, no white could be seen. Unlike white light which seeped into people, gold light poured into people. Unlike the calm atmosphere of the song, its power was tremendous.

'What's all this!? The greatest singing is at such a level!?'

He felt like he had seen a new world. Performance and staging were both alright. But to bring out such an influence with just

songs.... KangYoon was shocked at the world's greatest singer's grandeur. The girls were already absorbed into his song while they waved their hands.

Not only that, there was a video of suffering people, whether it was due to war, or other causes. That was the icing on the cake. The golden light went to its climax. The song was calm until the very end, but the people were violently shaken. There were even people who were crying or were making a resolve. It was even affecting their emotions.

– Heal –

The light also dimmed along with his fading voice. While the music faded out, Samuel's figure disappeared into the darkness.

“Woooooooooooooooooow!”

The song completely ended, and when darkness pervaded, the cheers of the people decorated the stage one last time.

“...Awesome. It's the first time I've been to such a concert.”

“Me too. I don't think I'll ever forget it.”

Like what Han JooYeon and Seo HanYu were saying, the concert today left a deep impression on them. They even put some money into charity for African children on their way out. That was the level of influence of the song.

Everyone got on the car. While the girls were busily talking about the concert, KangYoon was also thinking about the concert on the window seat.

‘If I could bring the greatest singer to such a stage....’

A parade of golden light.

The concert that colored everyone with smiles and tears was unforgettable for KangYoon.

‘So, this is the world.’

The world contained people that did such concerts. If he didn’t know that, he might have rotten away as a frog in a well. Although he was doing well until now with the knowledge of his previous life, the world was vast. KangYoon was happy to have found an objective.

“Ahjussi! She keeps hitting me!”

“...What!? It was you who hit me first.”

Jung MinAh sat next to KangYoon and pointed to Christie An. Thanks to that, KangYoon had to exit his thoughts. Christie An was fuming at the back. KangYoon silently gave a smack to both of them.

“Ouch!”

“Ack!”

“Who told you to run around in the vehicle.”

“It’s always me....”

When Jung MinAh grumbled, KangYoon wordlessly gripped his fist. Jung MinAh quickly fled next to Christie’s side in surprise and all the others giggled at her.

The peaceful days passed on like that.

Chapter 62. The Result Of 1 Year (1)

After coming back from America, KangYoon's time flowed very busily.

After talking about the theme of the debut stage with the producer of K Cable's 'Music Counter', he also had to discuss how to promote the girl group with the PR team.

After his meeting with the PR team was finished, KangYoon was now sharing the results with the planning team.

“...An EDDIOS-exclusive broadcast?”

Chief Kim JoonSeon of the planning team frowned after looking at the report that KangYoon brought. Vice-chief Min JoonHyuk or Kang ChangSeon was the same. Kang ChangSeon especially strongly disagreed.

“You mentioned about publicizing their actions after the broadcast. Then, we'll have to publicize them resting in the van, practice and even their private lives. I think it will be bad to publicize so many things when stars last long when they become a target of admiration.

His opinion was very valid. KangYoon also agreed and continued his words softly.

“You're very right, Vice-chief Kang. However, if we think about the point in time the broadcast will take place, it will be one month after their debut. If we do really well, that will be the time we take 1st in the rankings and gather recognition, or may struggle in the low rankings. However, the common point is that they aren't simply targets of admiration for teens, our primary target audience. I can also do it if I try. They are my future – In the end, it's all about dreams. They will become friendly and close existences. We will take that opportunity.”

“Team leader, you know that it isn't easy to become a singer.”

Vice-chief Kim JoonSeon retorted to KangYoon's words. However, KangYoon shook his head. (T/N: Kim JoonSeon is supposed to be chief, but author made mistake)

“We can say that because we actually know what's happening. However, teens would only run while looking ahead. They are sure that they will be able to win this vicious competition if they sing well, or if they dance well. We know that that's not all of it, but they don't. We will use this trend to take a step closer to them. The broadcast is just one side of this.”

KangYoon's point was that even after the back stories of EDDIOS was publicized after their broadcast, it would cause interest and not decrease the admiration or mysteriousness about them. Everyone accepted after hearing him out.

“Understood. I'll look into it.”

Chief Kim JoonSeon checked the necessary things.

KangYoon followed with other important topics and finished the meeting.

‘Ah.... So tired.’

Leaving the meeting room, KangYoon felt his body loosening. After he had come back to Korea, he had to work for many hours without being able to adapt to the jetlag. He was worried that his body may break down. However, there were still several more meetings for him to attend. He secretly sighed just sensing the piles of work ahead of him.

The endless stream of work eventually finished late at night. KangYoon, having finished the vicious relay of meetings, took care of all paperwork before leaving his office. By tomorrow, these documents would go to the president's office. KangYoon smiled a little after imagining President Lee HyunJi who would be smothered in the piles of paperwork tomorrow morning.

When KangYoon came back home, HeeYoon was waiting for him

while reading a textbook about harmonics.

“You’re back?”

“It’s late, why aren’t you sleeping?”

No matter how many times KangYoon said this to her, HeeYoon never listened. Of course, sometimes she would sleep when her body was simply too exhausted to stay awake, but this nice little sister did not sleep until KangYoon returned home most of the time. KangYoon felt sorry for her.

“Hm? You’re studying music?”

“Yeah. Isn’t this what you’re always reading?”

“Yep. Isn’t it hard?”

“It’s a little hard, but it’s still doable.”

KangYoon was honestly surprised. He barely understood the basics of harmonics after reading through the book several times. Doable? He really did feel that young minds were better for studying.

“Tell me if you need any more books. I’ll buy them for you.”

“Okay. But oppa, are you going to learn composition or something?”

“I want to if I can, though, it won’t be easy.”

“Wow, my oppa is great.”

“I still don’t know yet. I still can’t differentiate between musical notes and tadpoles.”

Although he denied that, HeeYoon knew that KangYoon was always putting in an effort. He always jotted down a few lines he heard from producers when he was a manager in order to learn planning. HeeYoon believed that he will use them well even though he might not be doing well right now.

‘I also need to do something.’

Seeing KangYoon trying hard all the time, a weak body was just an excuse. She always felt that it wouldn't do good for her to just stay like this when looking at someone who lived their life to the fullest.

‘Should I, do this for real?’

HeeYoon's eyes shined while looking at the book named ‘Foundations of Harmonics’. This was actually quite fun for her as well.

The hottest topic in MG Entertainment nowadays was the debut of EDDIOS. Right now, when the entire company was focusing on EDDIOS, the directors, the president, and even the chairman couldn't speak about their own profit.

The final directors meeting before EDDIOS's debut.

KangYoon usually didn't get called to directors meeting a lot, but he volunteered to attend today. He uploaded a PPT file to the projector and was presenting it to everyone.

“...The debut stage will be at Music Count of K Cable. The time will be the 2nd week of December. We have around 8 minutes.”

“You got quite a lot of time even though it's a debut stage. The competition should have been fierce due to it being Christmas season.”

“I benefited from the value of the name MG Entertainment a lot.”

Although KangYoon said that, Chairman Won JinMoon actually shook his head. Not only him, even the directors knew that it was hard to be assigned more than 5 minutes for rookies. This was all thanks to KangYoon's business ability.

“It's going similar to JooAh's Japan debut. Isn't there something like a scandal this time?”

“Hahaha.”

Chairman Won JinMoon lightly switched the mood. KangYoon also laughed and went to the next slide.

KangYoon presented in detail about what they were doing now, how they will be promoted, and what kind of activities they will do in the future. Although it took a considerable amount of time, everyone focused on his words while even writing some things down.

“...That will be the end of my presentation. Do you have any questions?”

However, unlike the previous meeting, there was no one that grabbed the microphone. Everyone was looking at Chairman Won JinMoon. KangYoon had a look around before declaring.

“With that, I will now conclude the presentation related to EDDIOS’s debut.”

A round of applause erupted. KangYoon politely took a bow before sitting next to President Lee HyunJi. It was right next to the main seat, but no one stopped him. He was implicitly admitted to being important within the company.

“EDDIOS, to give (DIO) a promise (ED). Both the meaning and the sound is good. Don’t you think so?”

“Yes, Chairman.”

Director Jung HyunTae immediately answered. All the other directors frowned, but the point-earning company politics never ended.

“Good. Let’s end it here today. The directors should also think about EDDIOS a lot too.”

“Yes, Chairman.”

“EDDIOS, and Min JinSeo. It’s good that the end of this year is filled with good events. Let’s go.”

Chairman Won JinMoon seemed to have felt good as he left the

meeting room while humming. Following him, the directors all left and eventually only KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi were left in the meeting room.

“Thanks for your work.”

“Thanks for your work.”

President Lee HyunJi gave KangYoon a candy. The sweet candy would energize him after that tiring presentation. KangYoon said thanks and put it in his mouth. The sweet flavor was great.

“Team leader Lee is always getting praised. People will mistake you for the Chairman’s son, you know?”

“No way, really?”

“I might.”

KangYoon smiled at the joke. When KangYoon organized the presentation materials at the front, President Lee HyunJi spoke to him.

“Do you know that they’re discussing putting JinSeo as a candidate of a reward?”

“Really? That’s a first for me.”

“Right now, it’s still some leaks so it’s not so trustworthy. But apparently, she’s being talked about as a candidate for ‘Child actress award’ and the ‘Best supporting actress award’.”

“Really?”

KangYoon couldn’t hide his surprise. After appearing on ‘Whispers of the Stars’, he heard that there was a flood of requests from dramas for Min JinSeo. After deep consideration, she appeared in the drama named ‘I run towards you’, as the childhood character of the main heroine, and she had acquired good feedback.

“Oh yeah, Team leader Lee. Aren’t people scouting EDDIOS at the end-of-year award ceremony?”

“Yes. I replied to them that I will think about it.”

“I wish it goes well.”

Her wish was KangYoon’s wish. He cleaned up the meeting room before heading to the practice room.

When KangYoon entered the practice room, the girls, who were practicing hard until now stopped the music and sat down. Now, KangYoon didn’t need to tell them anymore.

“Today, I came here to select a leader.”

Everyone perked their ears when they heard KangYoon’s words. The leader was an important position that was in charge of communication between the company and the team as well as many other things. Also, the leader would also receive more attention from the fans as well.

Everyone awaited KangYoon’s words while wondering who it was and if it was them.

“Jung MinAh.”

“Yes?”

“The leader of EDDIOS is you.”

“Whaaat?”

This was so sudden for Jung MinAh. The other girls were disappointed but nodded their head in admittance. Of course, that excluded Jung MinAh.

“I, I am the l, leader?!”

“Yeah, so?”

“N.... no way. I am?”

Jung MinAh asked again, but KangYoon’s words didn’t change. She couldn’t believe it and turned around to look at the other girls, but they were indifferent about it as well. It was a silent approval from them all.

“Any objections?”

“No.”

Jung MinAh couldn't get herself together since she was appointed as the leader without any hassle whatsoever. She always thought that leaders had to be smart and cool. She thought that Han JooYeon or Christie An would be the one but it turned out to be her.... She still couldn't believe it.

However, KangYoon thought differently.

“MinAh, I judged that you could become a good leader for all of the girls. You are smart, and considerate now too. Though, your expressions are still quite rough.”

Everyone giggled in agreement. Jung MinAh desperately denied that but the milk was already spilled.

“Hey hey. Miss Leader says she'll treat you to a drink.”

“Oooh! Leader! Leader!”

“.....”

Thanks to KangYoon's propaganda, Jung MinAh had to spend all the thousand won notes (1 USD) in her pocket.

Mid-December with cold winds.

It even snowed and the world turned white. Everyone exclaimed at the slightly late first snow, and some swore as well.

However, that did not apply to anyone here right now.

“Aah, it's finally today...!”

“The unnis are debuting today! Gather around!”

K Cable station where EDDIOS would be debuting was already full. EDDIOS's fan club, Aries, was making a formation with various banners and glowing sticks.

When the girls of EDDIOS arrived, they were shocked by the banners with their group name and their own names written on it.

“Wow, it’s our fan club.”

When Han JooYeon muttered that without even getting off the van, Ailee Jung also chimed in.

“There’s my name too....”

Seeing a middle school girl covered in the snow holding a banner with her name on it, Ailee Jung felt complex array of emotions. No, it was the same with everyone else.

At that time, KangYoon, who was in the front seat, calmly told them.

“They are people who came here to see you. In this cold weather too.”

“.....”

KangYoon’s words came as a pressure for all of them. KangYoon naturally knew that but continued to speak.

“prove to them that their decisions aren’t wrong.”

“Yes.”

The van headed to the underground parking lot of the TV station. Lee SamSoon asked about whether they had to greet the fans at least, but KangYoon shook his head. He also said that there had to be a suitable distance between the team and the fans.

KangYoon sent the girls to the waiting room and headed to the PD immediately. Producer Yoon MinCheol, who directed Music Count, was currently speaking with the lightings director who was having a look at the lighting devices.

“Hello?”

“Oh, Team leader Lee. Welcome.”

KangYoon shook hands with Producer Yoon MinCheol. The two

had already met before. They met a few times while working on this project and had good opinions of each other due to their attitudes. Thanks to that, KangYoon could get more allotted time, and could also get a wide waiting room as well.

KangYoon handed out drinks to the staff. KangYoon's generosity was already well-known among the staff. Thanks to that, everyone had good opinions of him.

“There are no singers who come so early. It will be empty for at least 2 hours so use it to your heart's content.”

“Thank you. The broadcasting time....”

“I have scheduled it at a time where there are a lot of views.”

He put his thumbs up since he had a deal with KangYoon. Although the results were simple, the effort KangYoon and the liaison team had put in the process was very difficult.

The stage devices were set and a large ship replica and a model of a wave came in. The lightings changed accordingly and the dry ice machine was also installed in its place. There were several edits since it didn't fit with the wave so the time was slightly delayed.

“Wow....”

Jung MinAh and the other girls arrived at the stage. They were wearing stage make-up and even costumes as well. They were practically ready to record for the broadcast.

“Here, it's here!”

“Wow, awesome!”

The stage was opened and the audience started entering. The fans, who were shaking in the cold outside, filled the seats from the front row with red hands that held banners. The girls felt emotional after looking at that.

‘Let's do this well.’

‘Yeah.’

Everyone agreed to Jung MinAh's words.

There was no dry rehearsal. Since they were already in their costumes, the dress rehearsal, the camera rehearsal and the introduction to the song happened all at once. KangYoon also started seeing the waves of musical notes and light from the girls.

‘Looks like they’re in good condition.’

The light dance routine they did to see the movement lines were in perfect sync. The staff was surprised and the fans started cheering. Just a light practice was already like this. How good would the actual deal be? – was what was on their minds.

“They are really good.”

“Thanks.”

Producer Yoon MinCheol, next to KangYoon, also commented.

Since there were 6 of them, it took a little time to adjust the volume of each microphone. Thanks to that, the sound engineer was annoyed a little, but the girls did not compromise with this. They were educated quite strictly at the company after all. Only after Lee SamSoon's microphone was completely adjusted at last did they stand in their positions on the stage.

“Is it an MR?”

“Yes. What is it?”

“No, it's nothing. It's just that the song isn't loud. Kids these days dance hard though.... Will they be alright?”

Producer Yoon MinCheol tilted his head while talking to the sound engineer. He also thought that EDDIOS was different than the current idols who performed with MRs with light lyrics in the background. However, he was a producer. He put away his private thoughts.

After being told that that the lights, the sound, and the various devices were completely ready, he told the broadcasting team.

“Let’s start!”

With his signal, a red light turned on all cameras.

EDDIOS’s debut was here.

Chapter 63. The Result Of 1 Year (2)

“Kyaa! It’s MinAh! MinAh-unni!”

“Ris! Ris!”

When Jung MinAh and Christie An took place in the center, the girls in uniform that held up banners screamed out. There was various text on those banners ranging from ‘MinAh Unni FTW’ and ‘Ris Ris Our Ris’.

‘Hey, it’s the ones from before.’

‘Awesome.’

Christie An agreed with Jung MinAh’s words. Those girls in uniform were the same ones that were in front of the TV station in the freezing cold. They felt curious about how they gained fans before they managed to do anything.

When everyone got into position, the sign came down and the music started flowing out. It was the title song ‘Together’. Jung MinAh and Christie An decorated the front magnificently with their steps and when they slid to the sides, Seo HanYu pushed forward to the center.

– One day – the park late at night—the white horse rocker—

Seo HanYu’s voice and even her breath rung out on the stage. She was currently wearing an ear-mic that barely covered her mouth. No, the other girls were the same. Thanks to that, they could live-perform on the stage without using AR.

Debut, live stage.

The staff had their jaws agape while watching EDDIOS’s stage. Girls with ear-mics while dancing vividly. It was a fresh shock for them.

‘They’re amazing. They can sing on a live show with such a dance routine?’

‘Kids these days are amazing.’

Whispered the male staff members that were controlling the dry ice machine from behind the stage. Thanks to their chatter, they almost missed the right time to eject the dry ice.

The stage colored in faint yellow and blue was not flamboyant. However, it was enough to emphasize the girls on stage. The spotlight enveloped all the girls and did their job.

They were releasing a strong white light right now.

‘Phew.’

When the 1st verse ended and the interlude came, KangYoon could sigh in relief. Before it was Ailee Jung’s turn, Jung MinAh’s solo dancing stage played out. The powerful snaps along with the popping dance enchanted the audience who didn’t look interested in them before.

‘MinAh definitely has the power.’

KangYoon saw that Jung MinAh’s dancing made the light stronger. KangYoon had requested the staff beforehand to take special care of the lights and other special effect machines when it was Jung MinAh’s dance. A pillar of smoke burst out while moving lights emphasized Jung MinAh in turns. This, in turn, made the light even stronger.

The interlude finished and Jung MinAh went back. Next up was another verse. Ailee’s powerful voice followed.

– When I open my eyes the fresh-sunlight—greet me – and I feel the excitement—

Although the song had a bright mood, it still contained emotions with a powerful voice. The powerful voice was essential and it instead stimulated the feelings of people.

KangYoon was breathless while watching EDDIOS’s debut stage from the back of the stage.

The performance was nearing its climax. Everyone stood in one line and started raising their voice. The tone became higher and the girls danced a lot faster as well.

Then Han JooYeon raised her voice.

– I feel there will be good things—

The song reached its highest point. Along with an echo, her voice was emphasized and spread out a lot.

“Wowwwwww!”

The audience cheered and waved their banners after hearing Han JooYeon’s high-pitched voice. They waved glow sticks, shouted, and cheered on for EDDIOS. The name EDDIOS was engraved into all the audience.

– Let’s think about the – the good things—

The girls’ voices faded out. Along with that, the cheers from the audience could be heard louder. Along with the cheers that engulfed them, the girls finished their first stage.

“Thank you!”

“Woooooooooow! Ed-di-os! Ed-di-os!” (T/N: I think I’ll stop capitalizing Eddios now)

After they finished their first stage, the girls were engulfed in the cheers of the audience shouting ‘Eddios’.

“You’ve done well.”

“Thanks for your work!”

In the waiting room, KangYoon greeted the girls who had finished the recording of their second song as well. He was proud of the girls that had finished their debut stage without any hiccups.

“Wow!”

The girls exclaimed after looking at the food that filled the table in the waiting room. They were surprised to see ‘normal’ food that had nothing to do with their diet.

“Can we really eat something like this?”

When Christie An asked in worry, KangYoon replied.

“Just for today.”

Flash!

At the same time, the fried chicken, pizza, tteokbokki, and the others all started vaporizing. Not to mention the managers, even KangYoon couldn’t find a room to get food within their ranks. They were literally hunger demons.

‘Team leader, people might think that we don’t feed them at all.’

‘Ah, my head....’

Head manager Han TaeHyung and KangYoon sighed while looking at the girls who were wiping out all the snacks.

Producer – Oh JiWan

Composer – Loin

Lyricist – Loin

Dance routine – Ham GiHoon

President Choo ManJi of Yoonseul entertainment was watching Eddios’s debut stage with his arms crossed.

“That guy’s name sure doesn’t appear very easily. Though, they sure are good.”

After the debut stage, President Choo ManJi immediately turned off the TV. After looking at the credits for the music, he seemed to have thought up of Lee KangYoon, who he had seen in the showcase and seemed to have felt that any information about him was hidden.

Edddios was definitely a big hit on the debut stage. The figures of the fan club that could be seen throughout and the cheers from the audience was enough for him to feel the passion at the scene. Thinking about KangYoon who created such a stage without showing himself, he felt quite a complex range of emotions.

“SeGyung, what do you think?”

President Choo ManJi asked the five girls sitting in front of him. The girl called SeGyun was the one closest to him.

“They’re amazing.”

“Yes, they are indeed. So, do you think you can win against them?”

This was his point. Can you five win against those six? He was blatantly asking that.

“Yes.”

Joo YeAh answered with confidence. She had a sharp demeanor just like her eyes. The girls sitting there were all thinking the same thing.

However, President Choo asked again.

“We’re not filming a youth drama. Those girls, they aren’t going to be easy to beat. They prepared for a long time.”

“Yes. We know. But we aren’t that easy to beat either. I have the confidence.”

The youngest member of the team, Kim JiSook, put the icing on the cake.

Hearing her words, President Choo gave them some papers.”

“Good. Then I shall believe that you have already decided. Sign.”

“Yes!”

With a vigorous answer, everyone signed the paper in front of them. It was a contract for them to act as singers officially.

After signing and exchanging the papers, President Choo said one more line.

“It’s next month. Get ready.”

“Yes!”

President Choo’s office was filled with strong voices from five women.

After their first debut stage, Eddios went around a few TV stations to perform a few more times. They sang the same songs, but they showed different stage costumes each time. However, unlike K Cable station, they only sang once in other TV stations.

Evening.

Han JooYeon had returned to the dorms early after an interview at O TV station. Normally, Seo HanYu would greet her at the door, but she was covering her face in front of the computer. No, everyone was discussing whatever it was on the screen.

“I’m back. What are you doing?”

When Han JooYeon went to see them to see what they were up to, everyone was watching the feedback on a music chart website.

Eddiosnice – I’m trying to vote and it doesn’t work... T_T Good luck Eddie

Yoon SeolHwa – Itsthebestimustbuyit

Park GeuRyeong – I feel like my ears are purified... so it’s on 1st after all. ♥

Jang JaeJoon – I’m running out to buy CD because this isn’t enough... ah dammit, it’s twelve right now, isn’t it?

...

Han JooYeon, who pushed everyone out the way and stood in front of the monitor made a smile after looking at the positive

feedback. She felt like her fatigue had blown away.

“So, it feels like this.”

“Isn’t it good?”

When Lee SamSoon asked excitedly, she agreed strongly. None of the girls left the computer. The song had stabilized in the top five. It was 1st when it came up and then 3rd, and had now stabilized.

“Par’y?” (T/N: Party with a silent ‘t’)

Everyone’s eyes shined when Jung MinAh suggested that.

“Par’y! Yeaaaah!”

The girls took out various food from the fridge and enjoyed their night.

Though, they were scolded by manager Han TaeHyung the next day for overeating....

While the girls were popping champagne, KangYoon was checking various work from the liaison team.

‘The first work is the most important....’

KangYoon knew better than anyone that the first impression lasted longer than anything and so considered each work with caution. There were many entertainment programs and events but he had to be careful in his choice.

‘The immediate profit is important, but first....’

KangYoon judged that stabilization came first. If he wished to, they could earn money while running events right now. However, it was a foolish thing to throw away the future just because of a chance to get a petty sum now. Having come to a decision, KangYoon pushed aside the various events. He selected large-scale events where they could stand in front of many people, and sorted the TV programs that came for each member.

‘SBB Actors Award Ceremony?’

There was something that entered his eyes. It was an invitation to the SBB TV station’s Actors Aware Ceremony.

‘This seems good. But rather than deciding right now....’

KangYoon was cautious. Rather than signing the document right away, he decided to consider it a little more and put the papers on the side.

He also referred to the list that the liaison team and the planning team had made that suggested places where they should go to. He also gathered some information from the internet and the fan café. It wasn’t easy to decide their appearances. (T/N: Fan café is an online fan community, not an actual coffee shop. Just in case you didn’t know)

Only the ticking of the clock could be heard in his room. However, along with a few knocks, someone quietly opened the door.

“JinSeo?”

“Hello.”

Min JinSeo, who seemed to have gotten back from a recording and looked tired, quietly entered his room. KangYoon gave her a cup of warm tea.

“Thank you.”

“What’s up? It’s time for you to go home right now.”

“Nothing, I guess.”

She lightly passed that question and handed KangYoon a paper bag she had brought. When KangYoon received it, it was some midnight snacks.

“Hey, why did you bring such...”

“It’s my payday today. Although I give all my pay to my parents.

I... tried buying some.”

“I was just getting hungry. I’ll gladly take it.”

Since KangYoon was just getting hungry, her gift was like a sweet rain in a drought. Although he offered her to eat as well, she declined saying that she was full. She also talked about how she had a backlash from shooting eating footage all day.

Min JinSeo passionately talked about her recording story. Her conversation with KangYoon was fun. Although she didn’t talk a lot in front of others, she was always a chatterbox in front of KangYoon.

“...So, the camera director and the PD fought today.”

“Their fight was intense. Probably more so because the producer was someone new.”

“Camera directors are usually veterans with over ten years of experience. They know what kind of footage would be used in the actual broadcast so it’s no wonder for someone like that to get upset when he’s ordered to film at a strange angle.”

“Aah, I also had a hard time filming the same scene repeatedly. It’s good that they are motivated but....”

After talking about the rookie PD, she switched topics.

“I was invited to an Award Ceremony this time.”

“I heard. Wasn’t it the Youth Actor/Actress reward?”

“Yes. I can’t sleep when I think about it. I can still remember when I was a trainee....”

“It’s because you did well that you’re being given an award. Don’t you think?”

“Hahaha.”

“It must be hard to choose a dress. I’ll say this now, but I don’t recommend a low-cut dress.”

“...Don't I have a pretty good bodyline?”

Min JinSeo's reaction was slightly weird. Thin waists with ample chest and hips – she had a 'wannabe' body figure that anyone would be envious about. She was slightly dissatisfied with KangYoon's words. However, KangYoon gave her a smack instead.

“Ouch!”

“Do you want the 'slutty' tag on you already? Do that after you're in your twenties. You're just a teen....”

“Ah, sir. I'm also a grown up now.”

“Forget it, what grown up....”

How was that grown up, KangYoon felt absurd about the age-talk but laughed anyway. A child actress with a low-cut dress? KangYoon's reactions were natural.

“Do you want to hear that you're a child that wants to act like a grown up? Forget about it. Don't persuade the weak-hearted manager into this either. Okay?”

“...Yees. I shouldn't have come here....”

“Pfft.”

KangYoon burst out into laughter at her last words.

“Well.... I guess that's the dress. My real worry is something else.”

“Real worry?”

When her expression became serious, KangYoon also changed his attitude.

“I got a request from SBB's Award Ceremony. Asking me whether I want to put a singer in the interlude.”

“So what did you do?”

“I asked the Chairman about it.....”

“And?”

“He said to ask you.”

“.....”

KangYoon was at a loss for words. Chairman Won JinMoon had definitely sent her his way on purpose.

“I think I need to do it.... The PD for the Acting Award Ceremony has a great amount of influence apparently. I think it will be difficult to reject.”

“It’s a difficult problem. Who did you decide to do it with?”

“I haven’t decided yet. Actually, they said it would be fine if I just appeared....”

The Award Ceremony itself was a worry, but a stage in the interlude? No wonder she was worried. However, at that moment, a good idea came to KangYoon’s mind.

“It will be better with many than going solo, right?”

“That’s true. It’s a lot more pressure too... I don’t have any stage experience other than the time I went to the Angel’s House with you. And this time, it’s in front of actors and actresses.... Uu, it will definitely be better with more people.”

“Then why don’t we do it with Eddios?”

“Sorry?”

Min JinSeo’s eyes widened.

“Eddios was also invited this time. Since it came to this, why don’t you go up together with them? I think it will be a good topic for the media.”

“I’m all for it!”

Min JinSeo was okay with that. She would go up to the stage with six other people around her age. They were also colleagues of the same company too. It would lessen the burden on her.

“Okay, then.... Looks like I’ll have to sign that one as well. Instead, you must practice with Eddios as well so let’s make some schedule adjustments.”

“Yes, don’t worry about that. I knew you could solve every one of my problems. Thank you.”

“Nah, not every one of them.”

It always ended like this. Min JinSeo’s eyes would shine and KangYoon would feel awkward. The gaze of an admiring girl was delightful, but it always came with some pressure.

“Then I’ll get going, sir.”

“See you later.”

After Min JinSeo left, KangYoon called the managers to reschedule each team’s plan a little.

Chapter 64. The Result Of 1 Year (3)

“A collaboration between Eddios and Min JinSeo, huh? Sounds good.”

President Lee HyunJi didn't even read KangYoon's report properly. She only read the title page before signing the paper.

“Are you not going to read it?”

“I know you've done well.”

“.....”

“I was joking, okay? I'll talk to the chairman about it.”

KangYoon was at a loss of what to say after seeing the fast track entry into signing. Of course, President Lee HyunJi and Chairman Won JinMoon were going over the details.

When KangYoon was about to leave, President Lee HyunJi called out to him.

“Do you have some time this evening?”

“Is it a get-together?”

“It's too early to celebrate for this. I have a schedule with ChanYang-seonbae, can you come as well?”

“Okay. I got it.”

KangYoon immediately accepted. Although he couldn't attend too many lectures since he was busy with work, he was still revising the music theory he had learned. Professor Choi ChanYang was his savior.

“I'll see you at 7 then.”

KangYoon headed to his office.

Although he had a lot of things to do, he did them one by one. Spending time like that, he realized that it was already time. KangYoon hurried to the lobby.

“Let’s go, then.”

The place he went to along with President Lee HyunJi was a restaurant in Gangnam. It was a place that had quiet music in the background, and was perfect for having quiet talks in.

When he entered while being guided by the attendant, Professor Choi was waiting for them.

“Seonbae.”

“HyunJi, and Mr. KangYoon.”

After light greetings, they sat down and talked about the recent matters. President Lee HyunJi was quite relaxed, unlike her usual self. Her usual stiff attitude was barely present, and Professor Choi also talked with his unique soft voice.

‘Are they lovers?’

Even KangYoon was confused about the relationship between the two.

When they were filling their stomachs with the steak, Professor Choi spoke to KangYoon.

“The students want to see you again, Mr. KangYoon. Are you busy nowadays?”

“Yes. It’s hard to make any time at all. Oh, what happened to Recovery? They should have received a lot of attention after the festival....”

“They’re doing well. Please make some time for them when you can. ChanMin wants to have a drink with you again.”

When Professor Choi raised his glass, the two raised their glasses and cheered before tasting the wine. When the faint fragrance of wine lingered in their mouth, he started talking again.

“It’s good to become a singer, but most of them wanted to become composers. They put their heads together, and in the end, refused. Though, HyunAh seems to think differently.”

“Oh, that’s why she went to Hongdae.”

“So you knew.”

“I was contacted by her. Apparently, she’s looking for the members herself. I don’t know what happened to her now though.”

“She said that she got people for the drums and the bass, and is looking for the guitar. Looks like she saw someone amazing on the street. Apparently, she’s chasing him down for days now.”

“HyunAh has been quite active then.”

KangYoon was surprised. She was very different from back when she couldn’t even present her own idea to her seniors. On one side, he was very proud of her as well. Since she had decided to stand up alone, she had to do this so it was kind of obvious as well.

President Lee HyunJi took interest in this matter she didn’t know about. She knew a little of the winners of the bronze medal at the College Pop Festival, Recovery, but she knew nothing about what happened to the team after that. And KangYoon did something? Of course, she was interested.

“That HyunAh girl is the vocal for Recovery, right?”

“Yes.”

“How old is she?”

When President Lee HyunJi asked, Professor Choi thought for a little before speaking.

“21. She’ll be 22 next year. What, are you going to scout her?”

“Well, if Team leader KangYoon says so.”

She was trying to get a reaction from KangYoon. However, KangYoon shook his head without hesitation.

“She’s different to what the company is striving for.”

“Really? Then what about someone you are striving for, Mr.

KangYoon?”

“Then, I’m not really sure.”

KangYoon smoothly skipped over the topic. He implied that he would consider it if it was KangYoon Entertainment and not MG Entertainment. However, KangYoon didn’t talk further about it and stood up from his seat saying he wanted to go to the toilet.

When one person leaves from a group, the conversation would naturally switch to being about the person that just left.

“Seonbae, how was Mr. KangYoon in class?”

“He was diligent. He scored well in exams and did well in homework as well. Though, it’s a pity that he couldn’t get close to the students.”

“Well, he has nothing to lose. Can I ask you to take care of him next year as well?”

“I’m all welcome. He’s someone I have a lot to learn from, you know?”

“Thank you, seonbae.”

President Lee HyunJi asked for a toast with the wine glass. When the two met glasses, a clang from the glasses spread out.

“But HyunJi.”

“Yes, seonbae.”

“Have you found a lover yet?”

“.....”

Her expression instantly turned into that of the devil’s.

Sunday.

Since it was a rare holiday, KangYoon slept quite a lot. When he woke up later, he headed to meet up with Professor Choi

ChanYang. It was to catch up with the music theory classes.

“HyunAh.”

However, when he arrived, Professor Choi and Lee HyunAh were discussing a score. The two greeted KangYoon.

“Don’t you think you need to drop it down a semitone here?”

“Really? I’ll try.”

Lee HyunAh played the melody with a guitar after receiving Professor Choi’s suggestion. However, she didn’t seem to like it as she kept repeatedly writing and erasing notes. KangYoon watched the two with interest.

‘So, it’s definitely black at first.’

When Lee HyunAh played what was on the score, a thick black light hung around. However, KangYoon didn’t express his discomfort. He thought that it would become white naturally after the composition was finished.

“Mr. KangYoon, what do you think we should do here?”

“Huh? I don’t know anything about composing though....”

When Professor Choi ChanYang asked KangYoon that, KangYoon expressed his lack of composition knowledge. When he said that, Lee HyunAh approached him saying that it was alright.

“It’s fine. Oppa, you know about scales, right?”

“That I do.”

“The current song is in the B flat minor key. Then how many flats do I need?”

“Five: B, D, E, G, A” (T/N: That’s one obscure key)

“Wow, that’s right. Did you actually memorize it all? I heard you were busy, but I guess you did your study.”

KangYoon felt awkward at the flattery. Professor Choi also agreed to her words.

“It’s a difficult key but you already know about it. You can most likely write the melody as well.”

“I can?”

Professor Choi explained it to KangYoon in easier terms as he did not understand it.

“It’s actually very complex when you go into the theory, but I’ll put it into simpler terms. To put it in layman’s terms, you just need to enter whatever that fits the scale. Among the seven notes, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, there are five flats that are on B, D, E, G, A, respectively. You just need to create a melody with these seven. Why don’t you try with HyunAh?”

KangYoon fell into a panic. However, he was very curious when he heard that he was about to compose something. Lee HyunAh sat next to him and showed him the score. She urged him to do it together. KangYoon immediately took out a pen and started working on it.

Lee HyunAh played the guitar and KangYoon created the melody while talking about the key. Attaching chords to the melody required some other theory altogether so he didn’t go there. Lee HyunAh seemed to like teaching KangYoon and started explaining it in more detail.

“...Ooh. This is a good one. It’s a 3rd. Here, I....”

KangYoon also found it very interesting that the black light became fainter and fainter as his notes were inputted. Of course, that process was very long and gradual. However, the realm of composition was a completely new world for him. The joy of creating something was difficult to express in words.

The sun had set already. KangYoon’s was also gradually filled with coffee, some dessert, and dinner. However, KangYoon did not stand up in an attempt to hold his concentration in place. Lee HyunAh was also focused on her work. Perhaps she was swept by

the atmosphere around KangYoon.

‘Are management company people so monstrous at concentration?’

Only Professor Choi ChanYang blinked his eyes many times in surprise.

In the end, the three only left the café after its hours were over.

“Let’s make this a joint work from you and me.”

“Nah, you made most of it anyway.”

Lee HyunAh shook her head though.

“Not at all. You made quite a lot of the melodies as well. I only put the chords in and the actual melody was all made by you, wasn’t it? It’s been a while since I had a melody that gave me a good feeling. Oppa, why don’t you make a band with me?”

“Nah, that’s not good with me.”

KangYoon replied to a joke with a joke. Lee HyunAh seemed to feel good as she re-fastened the guitar.

Professor Choi also thought that it was nice. Hardworking students were always nice for the teacher to see.

“Just because the composition went well doesn’t mean that the song is complete. You need to complete the melody and arrange it as well.”

“By arranging, you mean putting other instruments or other sounds in it, right?”

“Yes.”

Professor Choi explained in detail.

“If you have the time, I recommend you try arrangement as well. You should have a lot of producers at your company, Mr. KangYoon, so you should be able to learn a lot from them. It will

be even better if you can get help from composers.”

“Understood. Look like I’ve learned a lot of things today.”

“I also had a great time.”

Professor Choi ChanYang took the bus home like he always did. KangYoon and Lee HyunAh headed to the station together. The two got onboard the empty train as they always did and talked to each other. They talked especially about the song.

“I’ll make you listen to the song first once it comes out.”

“I’ll be thankful if you do. I’m kind of curious to think that there will be a song that I touched.”

“I’ll definitely let you listen to it.”

Lee HyunAh even made a pinky promise that she would do so with KangYoon.

The train headed home with the two in it.

“HeeYoon, what are you looking at?”

HeeYoon’s neighbor at school, Jin SungHee became curious after she saw HeeYoon drawing something. However, HeeYoon couldn’t hear her due to being absorbed. Jin SungHee stood still for a moment before shaking HeeYoon a little.

“Lee HeeYoon.”

“Oh, SungHee, what’s up?”

Only then did HeeYoon turn away from her book. Jin SungHee turned her gaze to the book on HeeYoon’s desk.

“What’s this? Harmonics? Is it a music book?”

“Yeah.”

“Are you going to go to a music college?”

The most important thing for 3rd-year high school students was

their future paths. However, HeeYoon had never mentioned what she wanted to do in the future until now. But the same person was currently looking at a music book. Jin SunHee was curious.

“Music college?”

“Are you not?”

“I don’t know yet. I’m just reading.”

“Really? Well, I guess it’s hard. My brother is preparing for a music college and it’s been 3 years now, and he’s a complete jerk. Don’t do something like that.”

Jin SungHee frowned after thinking about her brother. A brother that hadn’t gone to college for 3 years? He was a complete jerk in the eyes of the little sister.

“Your brother must have it hard too.”

“Gah, forget it. Everyone in the house only has him in their view. I’m in my 3rd year as well, but they don’t even see me. So, don’t you dare dream about a music college, okay?”

HeeYoon didn’t reply. However, she was pressured by her friend so she vaguely skipped an answer before looking at the book again.

‘Music college? University? Can I really go to such a thing?’ (T/N: Consider college = university in this novel, I’ll be interchanging between the two when they use the same words in Korean.)

Nowadays, she had some energy even after dialysis. She thought that she might be able to commute to college if she tried.

Her friend’s attempt to persuade her out had the opposite effect instead.

Setting the schedule for Eddios and Min JinSeo so that they could practice together was like fishing a star out of the sky. Min JinSeo was very busy with shooting dramas, commercials and magazine pages, while Eddios, despite having just debuted, were being called

by many places thanks to the active marketing.

In the end, they could only meet up after midnight.

“Hello.”

When Min JinSeo arrived at the practice room after a night filming, the members of Eddios greeted her.

“Hello, JinSeo!”

5 girls including Han JooYeon greeted her. KangYoon was also with them.

“Huh? Sir.”

Min JinSeo was greeting the girls in delight when she found KangYoon who was at war with paperwork and approached him. It was very delightful to see him even though it was past midnight and he should have headed home.

“Oh, JinSeo, you’re here.”

“You haven’t gone home yet?”

“I was thinking of going home after I see you girls practice. MinAh will come soon as well.”

“Oh, okay. I’ll get ready then.”

Min JinSeo said that she’ll change into training clothes and headed to the changing room. When she came out, Eddios started practicing for real.

When they were in the middle of practice, a girl with long hair came in through the door. It was Jung MinAh.

“Hiiiiii!”

Jung MinAh was very lively after she had come back from a magazine interview. The music temporarily stopped and everyone expressed their greetings to her, who they hadn’t seen for the day.

“Ahjussi!”

She seemed to be excited as Jung MinAh approached KangYoon as well. However, what came back was a smack on the head.

“Ouch!”

“Where do you think we are, huh?”

“Urgh.... Fine, Team leader.”

At this point, she had to be doing it on purpose. KangYoon frowned slightly before signaling them to continue practicing. She nodded her head obediently and headed to the changing room.

‘What the hell is she?’

Min JinSeo’s eyes were lit on fire after seeing Jung MinAh being familiar with KangYoon?

After Jung MinAh came as well, the real practice began in proper formation. According to the dance routine, the trainer had made, Min JinSeo would dance alone for a little and Eddios would join after a while. After that, Eddios would have a stage of their own.

KangYoon calmly observed the light from the dances.

‘Looks like we need to set the standard on Min JinSeo after all.’

Even though she was once a trainee as well, the gap between her and Eddios was quite large. She even had a gap with Ailee Jung as well. Not to mention the rhythm, the difference showed in their angle of movement as well.

After a round of practice, Jung MinAh stepped up.

“Let’s follow JinSeo this time. HanYu, on this part....”

Jung MinAh explained to Seo HanYu her moves that she would do along with Min JinSeo since she was the closest to her. Seo HanYu immediately nodded in acceptance.

“JinSeo, on this part....”

“...Okay.”

However, Min JinSeo’s reaction was slightly strange.

‘Is it because she’s worse?’

Seo HanYu, who was at the same age as Min JinSeo, knew her personality to an extent. Min JinSeo was very prideful. Especially regarding practice. So, she didn’t say anything about it.

Practice began again and Seo HanYu followed Min JinSeo’s rhythm this time. It seemed to work as everyone’s movement gradually synced.

Rest time.

KangYoon left the practice room to let everyone rest comfortably. He also judged that he had seen enough of their practice. Since their breathing was matching as well, he didn’t see the need to stay any longer.

When KangYoon was about to leave quietly, someone poked him from the back. When he turned around, it was Min JinSeo.

“JinSeo.”

“Sir.”

She was pouting, unlike her usual self. KangYoon was confused.

“What’s up? Did something happen?”

“Can I ask you something?”

When KangYoon gave her the okay, she threw a direct ball.

“Are you very close to MinAh-unni?”

A direct ball was fine, but the direction wasn’t.

Just what the heck was she on about....

“What do you mean? Do you mean I’m biased?”

“No.... it’s not that. It’s just that you two look strangely close....”

“What?”

KangYoon was at a loss for words. Just what is this kid saying....

“Hahaha, Nah, isn’t it obvious that I’m close with MinAh? I’m

close to you as well, and HanYu too.”

“...So it’s nothing special, right?”

KangYoon pushed Min JinSeo’s forehead when she tried to interrogate him further.

“Go practice already. You still have some energy remaining?”

KangYoon climbed down the stairs like that. He kept giggling on the way down as he thought that it was absurd no matter how he thought about it. Though, Min JinSeo seemed to think differently.

‘So, it’s nothing special, right?’

She knew that KangYoon put things as they were. In that case, Jung MinAh was in the same position as her.

There was nothing to worry.

‘Good.’

Having received a confirmation, she returned to the practice room with a smile.

Chapter 65. The Result of 1 Year (4)

KangYoon was currently at work with the company intranet open.

However, he was notified through the intra-company messenger that the liaison team had erringly sent an attachment through email.

Sending company files and documents through personal email accounts was a very big risk in terms of security.

KangYoon encouraged the employee so that it will never happen again and opened his personal email.

‘It’s here.’

Personal email accounts were usually banned within the company, but he was an exception. It was a privilege for his position and achievements. KangYoon opened the email from the employee and downloaded the file. Then, he closed the internet window, or so he was about to when he saw an unfamiliar email.

‘Kidney transplant?’

KangYoon’s eyes widened as soon as he saw the email. He couldn’t wait for a kidney transplant just in Korea, so he was looking into transplants in foreign countries as well. Thanks to that, he had spent a lot of money, but he thought that it was a reasonable price for HeeYoon.

‘So someone like HeeYoon’s case isn’t that common. But the next after next? That seems promising.’

KangYoon was filled with expectation while reading down the email which was kindly written in Korean. This was worth all the money he had spent until now. He felt happy when he thought about doing various things with HeeYoon after she became healthy again.

Today was the collaboration stage between Eddios and Min JinSeo. Since it was an important event, KangYoon decided to attend to that himself. Since Eddios was on a schedule, they decided to meet up in the TV station while Min JinSeo would go with him since she was one of the candidates for an award.

KangYoon met up with Min JinSeo in the lobby and headed to SBB TV station where the Award Ceremony would take place.

When he arrived nearby, the red carpet was laid out along with a photo zone inside the lobby, and there were many fans and reporters in a formation.

“Wow...”

Min JinSeo was flabbergasted. Whenever a celebrity went up to the photo zone, all the people there were struggling to get closer. Some people even put their hands out, trying to touch the person. All of this was unfamiliar to her.

“You should get ready.”

Min JinSeo smiled brightly when KangYoon said that.

“Then I’ll be going!”

“See you later.”

Min JinSeo opened the door of the car and quietly walked onto the red carpet. Then, reporters and fans all rushed towards her. In the center of the red carpet, she waved her hand with a bright smile.

“She’s doing well.”

Looking at her, who was now a full-fledged star, KangYoon made a satisfied smile.

“Today might be busy – Tomorrow’s no good either –.”

In a small studio in Hongdae, Lee HyunAh was singing with 4

people. The drums, the bass, the electric guitar, and the synthesizer harmonized with her powerful voice and the song spread around the studio.

“I want to – urge the clock –”

The clean tone from the electric guitar was emphasized while the synthesizer did the background with some sound effects. With the solid bass from the drums and the bass guitar, Lee HyunAh’s song was emphasized once again.

After a round of practice, everyone gathered around.

“This is so good. Did you really make this, HyunAh?”

Kim JinDae, who played the drums, asked in excitement. Even Lee ChaHee, who played the bass guitar, felt the same.

“HyunAh, this is... great.”

She seemed to have fallen in love with this song. The other members felt the same. It was neither too fast nor too slow, but the rhythmic groove and Lee HyunAh’s power harmonized in a peculiar way and made a great result. Everyone didn’t hold back their praises.

However, Lee HyunAh shook her head, as though this was no good.

“Thanks, but this isn’t made by me alone.”

“Then?”

Lee HyunAh answered calmly when Kim JinDae asked.

“Someone helped me out– my guardian deity I guess? I’ll show you when we perform. He’s a cool guy.”

“Whew, a lover? I knew someone like HyunAh couldn’t be single.”

Jung ChanKyu, the one who played the electric guitar, teased her. However, Lee HyunAh firmly denied that.

“Unfortunately, the hurdle is too high. He’s too... nah, forget it. Let’s just practice.”

All the members of the band curiously interrogated her, but they couldn’t pry any information out. In fact, Lee HyunAh pushed them away and they just gave up.

Inside a waiting room of SBB TV station.

The place where 6 girls, the coordinators, and the manager was a complete disaster right now.

“Hey hey! Stop it there!”

In the middle of this disaster was Jung MinAh. She scolded Han JooYeon who was busy putting on makeup on her eyes while straightening Lee SamSoon’s hair with her hands.

“My eyes are completely weird, aren’t they?”

“They look fine. If you do anymore, you’ll become a panda.”

“Fine, okay.”

Han JooYeon grumbled but accepted Jung MinAh’s words. Jung MinAh was mostly in the right when it came to make-up. Jung MinAh had good judgment.

Another person came into the fray. It was KangYoon who brought Min JinSeo.

“Hello.”

Everyone greeted KangYoon since it was the first time they saw him today. They didn’t know that KangYoon was going to come today, but they didn’t panic.

“Yay.”

No, a few even rejoiced. Han JooYeon and Christie An in particular. Of course, the managers were cautious since their superior was here.

KangYoon checked up on their conditions. He had nothing to worry about their costumes since they came here straight from the pop competition in HMC TV station. He was only worried about their conditions. He asked again and again.

“We’re fine. We’re feeling great right now.”

Jung MinAh spoke up for all of them. She knew what KangYoon was worried about.

“JinSeo should be lacking compared to you girls so match with her, okay?”

“Yes.”

“There’s nothing else. Oh, yeah. Today’s the last day of 2008. Let’s finish this off well.”

KangYoon left the waiting room after a few words of well wishes. From behind him, he could hear ‘fighting!’ from Eddios behind the door. Their teamwork was good, and they were getting into their positions as well.

“Hey, aren’t you KangYoon?”

He was heading towards the audience seats to watch the Award Ceremony when someone called out to him. When he turned around, it was Writer Song TaeJin who boasted a burly figure as always.

“So it was you, noonim.”

“What the hell is up with that loose reaction?”

Writer Song TaeJin slapped KangYoon’s back. The sound was so loud that the nearby people looked at them to see what’s up.

“That hurts. And this is the TV station, you know?”

“So what? Are you embarrassed about me?”

“Nothing like that. Other than that, why are you here?”

She pointed towards her own attire when KangYoon asked that.

It was a suit for a woman.

“So it’s the Award Ceremony.”

“Apparently I’m getting the writer’s award this time. There’s also the manuscript award as well. So I came here to get awards. I got it so many times that it’s a bother now.”

“That’s so like you.”

KangYoon was about to turn around after bidding goodbye. However, it wouldn’t be Song TaeJin if she just sent him away here.

“What, didn’t you come here to watch?”

“I did.”

“Then why are you going there?”

The place KangYoon was headed to was the place where the members of the public came to spectate. Other than the people appearing on the stage or the candidates, everyone would sit in the audience seats and not at the tables at the front. KangYoon was confused.

“Because that’s where I sit. Then, if you don’t mind....”

“Wait, Hm, so you sit on that side, eh? Then come with me.”

“Wha?”

KangYoon was at a loss, but he was eventually dragged by her and sat down around a table where the cast was sitting. He panicked at first but he soon adapted. When he looked around, he was surrounded by producers, camera director’s, audio directors, and other ‘bosses’ of the staff.

KangYoon greeted all of them. After conversing with them briefly while exchanging business cards, this actually became an opportunity for him. All of them felt hesitation towards KangYoon at first since he was acting friendly, but they soon talked to him about a lot of things.

The Award Ceremony was a live broadcast. Inside the venue, the red light signifying the live broadcast turned on after a simple announcement. Then, the stage opened with the opening performance, a celebrity band.

– Today, I—

The celebrity band, ‘Sketchbook’, showed a good performance centered around an actor who was becoming increasingly popular as of 2008, Lee GyungHoon who was singing, and five others. The people at the tables clapped while the fans also replied with cheers.

However, what KangYoon saw was something different.

‘It’s grey.’

The combination of the musical notes was just not good. The inharmony and the ordinary voice was not so pleasant to listen to. Not only that, the stage devices didn’t seem to be working properly as the microphone echoed a lot.

‘The fandom sure is frightening.’

What was interesting was that grey light couldn’t win against the fandom. It was interesting for KangYoon to see people clapping with awkward smiles.

After their stage was over, 1 professional presenter and 2 actresses came onto the podium. After a brief introduction, the Award Ceremony began properly along with their declaration.

The rookie award, that all actors and actresses wanted, was awarded. The actors and actresses that received the rookie award teared up and some called out all the names on their list as well. Of course, due to time constraints, the presenter sometimes cut them short, but the joy of the rookie award was very big.

The rookie award was finished and the next in the ceremony continued.

“Next up is the youth actors award.”

After hearing the presenter’s words, KangYoon fixed his posture. The presenters prepared for the award ceremony while commenting and the awardees from the previous year came up to award this year’s awardee.

After the youth actors award ended, the youth actress award began.

“2008 SBB youth actress award, let’s watch.”

The 4 child actress candidates were listed on the big screen.

‘There she is.’

KangYoon could see Min JinSeo who came up 3rd. Her debut piece, ‘Whispers of the Stars’ as well as the following series was summed up into a short video. Min JinSeo’s acting stood out amongst the four candidates.

“That’s definitely for Min JinSeo.”

“The others are pretty good too, though.”

“Nah, they can’t be compared.”

Writer Son TaeJin’s evaluations were merciless. KangYoon only shook his head.

“SBB youth actress award! Miss Min JinSeo from the Whispers of the Stars! Congratulations!”

A round of fanfare played. Min JinSeo, who was called out along with a grand fanfare of music, couldn’t believe it. A moment later, she was congratulated by the other youth actors and actresses around her and walked to the stage absent-mindedly.

After receiving the trophy from the previous year’s awardee, she grabbed the microphone.

“Thank you. My very first drama was the Whispers of the Stars. I thank director Oh YeonJoong for taking care of me even though it

was my first time acting. I'm happy to receive this award in SBB where I first debuted. Director Yoo MiYeon, the lightings director, the business team, the camera team, and sir Jang GeunSoo as well.... Thank you very much to all of you. To my mom, dad, and my sister, MinJi who have endured for me all this time.... Thank you all so much. My teachers, my friends as well as my dear fans... thank you all as well. And finally..."

Taking a long time for her speech, Min JinSeo wiped the tears away from her face as she took a deep breath. Then, she turned around to see KangYoon.

"I thank sir Lee KangYoon from the bottom of my heart. You were the one who recognized me first and allowed me to stand where I am today. Happy new year. Thank you."

When Min JinSeo bowed politely and stepped down, a round of applause followed.

Writer Song TaeJin poked KangYoon's waist.

"Whoo, KangYoon. You kinda seem amazing now."

"Hahaha."

When the gazes around him fixed onto him, KangYoon made an awkward smile. His name being called out in a ceremony like this made him joyful and grateful. He felt like this was why people raised celebrities.

After that, KangYoon watched the ceremony with Writer Song TaeJin. Actually, KangYoon had no time to watch any dramas so he didn't know any dramas other than the ones that Min JinSeo appeared on. So he couldn't really sympathize with what anyone around him talked about. Writer Song TaeJin shook her head, but KangYoon only ignored her.

The first part ended, and the interlude came.

KangYoon headed to the waiting room behind the stage. Eddios and Min JinSeo were waiting for their entrance.

“Congratulations, JinSeo.”

“Thank you.”

The congratulating of the youth actress award winner continued behind the stage as well. Min JinSeo calmed herself down, but she still felt fluffy when the unnis congratulated her. At that time, KangYoon appeared.

“Sir-”

“Ahjussi!”

However, Jung MinAh was a little ahead of her. She stood in front of KangYoon fast.

“...We’re working.”

“Oops, my bad. Sorry about that.”

KangYoon sighed. She was probably doing this on purpose. He thought that he might tell her off later and talked about what was going to happen today.

“You looked at the stage, right?”

“Yes.”

“I heard that they fixed the microphone. The in-ear microphones were checked as well. Do you need anything else?”

“I knew I could count on you!”

Jung MinAh cheered for KangYoon’s reliability. The other girls were the same. KangYoon did all the things they had to ask the manager about the stage, so they had it easy.

However, Min JinSeo interfered with KangYoon and Jung MinAh.

“Uhm, sir. I.... am worried that the floor is too slippery.”

“The floor? Can I see your shoes?”

KangYoon sat down and had a look at Min JinSeo’s shoes. She

was wearing trainers, and they looked slippery for the stage. KangYoon picked up the shoes Min JinSeo took off and went to the coordinator behind him.

“Miss JinYoung. JinSeo’s shoes.”

“That should be fine though...”

“Please change it, just in case.”

“Yes, I’ll get to it immediately.”

She ran and immediately brought a different pair of the same color.

‘What’s she doing?’

Jung MinAh smirked after seeing Min JinSeo’s actions. Actually, the shoes weren’t that slippery. It was just Min JinSeo was trying to do something. Just as sparks were about to erupt between the two, the coordinator brought Min JinSeo’s new shoes.

“Do they fit?”

“Yes, unni. Sorry for worrying you.”

After a small complication, it came to the time when they had to go on stage soon. KangYoon looked at all of them and spoke.

“Break a leg.”

“Yes!”

The 7 girls headed onto the stage.

Chapter 66. Designing with Music (1)

“HyunJi, can I really trust this?”

“Oppa, believe in me this once. It’s definitely effective.”

President Lee HyunJi was currently doing business in a bar in Gangnam. The opponent was her senior from university, Gu YoungSoo. He was the owner of a big shoe store in Gangnam.

“Sheesh. Does changing music really affect the customers?”

“Times are changing. And like I said, there’s a guy who’s ghastly good at music in my company. You know JooAh, don’t you?”

“I do. I’m a complete fan of her. And thanks for her signature by the way.”

Gu YoungSoo blushed slightly.

“The one who sent JooAh to Japan is magical at music. I heard you were worried that your sales have been dropping lately. Why don’t you just try my idea? I heard your sales dropped because of the other stores. You need to give a change at a time like this.”

“Would changing music really affect the customers though?”

“I said believe in me this once.”

Gu YoungSoo was slightly doubtful but was eventually persuaded by President Lee HyunJi.

‘How effective could it possibly be?’

Even while accepting her offer, he was still skeptical.

“She was the heroine of television show, Whispers of the Stars. Let’s start the second part with a collaboration between Miss Min JinSeo and Eddios!”

Along with the presenter’s excited voice, the curtains to part 2 rose. Along with the curtains, the cameras all started flashing with

a red light.

Writer Song TaeJin also posed upright from her usual crossed-legged seating. Her colleagues were surprised by her actions.

The stage began and the girls of Eddios started dancing around Min JinSeo as the center. It was the title song of Eddios, 'Together'. However, it was re-arranged and had more power in the dance routine.

Eddios all matched their moves with Min JinSeo. Thanks to that, Min JinSeo didn't look out of place or anything.

When KangYoon came back to his seat, Song TaeJin greeted him.

"Wow, KangYoon. Did JinSeo dance so well?"

"She was originally a singer trainee after all."

"Oh yeah. Its MG isn't it."

Writer Song TaeJin honestly expressed her surprise at Min JinSeo's dancing abilities. Her dance was way above what any amateurs could do.

"What's JinSeo doing next?"

"I don't know. Apparently, she's doing something right now."

"I'll do one right after that. I thought of a good plot after seeing her dance like that."

Writer Song TaeJin, who asked KangYoon a question, suddenly took out some pen and paper before writing down some things. It was the 'idea notes' that writers used a lot. The collaboration stage was no longer important to her. Once she was inspired, the pen in her hand danced wildly.

The stage was nearing its climax. Seo HanYu and Min JinSeo snapped their bodies together and heightened the atmosphere. Even the calmer actors voiced out in excitement and the younger actors or the fans straight up cheered.

“Eddios!”

“JinSeo!”

...They couldn't be compared to the people in the audience though.

‘Not too bad.’

As KangYoon had thought, the stage was going well. Although the Award Ceremony was quite a serious one, the stage collaboration between Eddios and Min JinSeo presented them with a moment of a light mood.

The performance ended with Min JinSeo's v gesture and Eddios around her. When the girls exited among the cheers of the audience, KangYoon also stood up and headed to the back of the stage.

“Good work.”

“Thank you for your work!”

Everyone voiced out in unison. Min JinSeo was slightly surprised.

“Get changed and let's go home quickly. JinSeo is coming after the ceremony is over, aren't you?”

“...Yes.”

“Manager Yoon will take care of JinSeo and the girls of Eddios will go back. Let's talk about the specifics while going back to the dorms. Questions?”

“None!”

KangYoon was worried about Min JinSeo's dark expression. However, he left her to the manager thinking that she was jealous of the girls who went home early.

KangYoon left along with the girls. He quickly led the girls to the parking lot and left the TV station while avoiding the fans who

were waiting outside.

Inside the van, Jung MinAh grumbled.

“Their reactions were quite unlike the other stages.”

KangYoon thought differently though.

“It’s strange to scream like little girls in a place like that, though. Don’t you think?”

“That’s true, but....”

Wouldn’t they have wanted to enjoy as well? The gazes and cameras around them were scary.

KangYoon spoke while turning around.

“Good work. There, there. You know that tomorrow’s a holiday, right?”

“Yes!”

Holidays were always sweet.

Everyone shouted energetically when KangYoon mentioned holiday.

“Tomorrow is 2009.”

“Team leader. It’s 2009 already.”

The girls giggled at Lee SamSoon’s comment. It was already past midnight and it was nearing 1 a.m. KangYoon felt slightly awkward.

“Ehem, anyway! It’s 2009 now. Isn’t it?”

“Yes, yes.”

The girls were now close enough to KangYoon so that they could joke around with him. He spoke seriously while switching topics.

“We got our foundation, but there’s still a long way to go. But I believe in you. Rest well tomorrow and do your best in the future as well, okay?”

“Yes!”

The van that headed to the dorms was filled with the energetic voices of girls.

“JinSeo, you don’t look so well. Are you unwell?”

Manager Yoon HeeSeon asked Min JinSeo worriedly. However, she shook her head.

“No. I’m just a little tired.”

“Really? Should I get you some medicine?”

“Where can you find medicine at this time in the night? It will be alright after a little bit of rest.”

Min JinSeo declined. Manager Yoon HeeSeon distanced herself even while looking at her with worried eyes.

‘Tch....’

Min JinSeo kept remembering about how KangYoon took care of Eddios more than her. Naturally, she didn’t like what she didn’t like.

The new year’s sun rose.

KangYoon, who received a paid holiday of 3 days, could rest comfortably for a few days. It was a privilege that was only given to him. Thanks to that, KangYoon could enjoy his rest with HeeYoon while traveling around the country.

It was right before the Sunday, so he got a total of 4 days of rest.

On Monday.

KangYoon headed to the president’s office as soon as he came to the company.

“Welcome, Team leader Lee.”

“Hello.”

“We haven’t seen each other for a week now, did we? I feel like it’s been a while since we’ve seen each other.”

She ordered the secretary for some tea and lead KangYoon to the sofa. There were already many things prepared for him. KangYoon looked at the top one.

“Triangle? Isn’t this a movie manuscript?”

“It is.”

“A movie? Is this about JinSeo?”

President Lee HyunJi shook her head. She gestured that that wasn’t the case and gave KangYoon some papers titled ‘General Music Consulting’. When KangYoon flipped over the document and looked at it for a while, he was colored with confusion. He gulped while turning each page slowly. The contents weren’t light at all.

KangYoon spoke his mind after reading all of the document.

“A general business related to music.... Working with many music-related things and not just concerts.... I think the motivation is good.”

“Focusing on the concert team is good, but I had a feeling that it won’t be so bad to take part in many more things. We have a lot of budget, and have the advantage that we can utilize this budget. I’m thinking of making a specialized team and do this kind of work.”

“For a business like this, the role of the control tower is crucial. But as for us, we do not have such a....”

“You’ll do it.”

When President Lee HyunJi admitted that so easily, KangYoon blinked a few times. KangYoon silently asked ‘Why am I the one?’ with his expression. President Lee HyunJi answered his question.

“Team leader Lee. You have a good sense regarding music. Your

views on the market are also great, but from what I've seen until now, your judgment in musical pieces is greater than anyone. If we look at the singers you've planned for until now, there were many cases where you switched songs or did re-arrangements of the original. Would that have been possible without your senses for music?"

"President, that is...."

KangYoon was scared for a moment. President Lee HyunJi had unknowingly mentioned his ability to see light from music. Of course, there's no way she would know about his ability, but it was enough to startle KangYoon. After all, not everyone is suited to become the president.

"I can be sure about it; that we'll be able to do many things and not just concerts if you're here, Team leader Lee. The concerts you have planned for until now caused sensations, but did not bring a lot of profit to the company. That's my fault for doing bad business... but it will be different now. Let's do this together."

President Lee HyunJi's words were reasonable. However, KangYoon was still cautious in his decisions. Planning was something he had dived in after meticulous preparation and because he wanted to. However, areas other than pop music was another problem altogether.

"Can you give me some time to think about it?"

"Is a day enough for you?"

"Not at all, I'll just need a moment."

KangYoon fell into thought for a moment.

'A general work related to music.... It is definitely attractive, but I don't have anything ready yet.'

Actually, it was a very attractive offer. There was the charm that he could do music that was not related to concerts. However, the problem was his lack of foundation. President Lee HyunJi spoke as

though she knew about that.

“I spoke to seonbae already. Go listen to his lectures in holidays when you have the time. I’ll take care of the fees.”

“Thank you.”

“It’s an investment from the company.”

President Lee HyunJi cleared that problem. Investing such a meager sum was nothing to excavate a talented employee.

KangYoon spoke his mind after a moment of thought.

“I’ll try.”

“Good decision. The basic work is the same as the concert team. I’m going to make a subordinate business team and get orders, and Team leader Lee just should focus on work. There were a few problems in the concert team, but let’s do this well this time.”

“Understood. Then what do we begin with?”

Since he had decided this, the work progressed very smoothly. President Lee HyunJi gave him another set of papers. The document was titled ‘DRO mart retail music coordination’. KangYoon expressed his confusion.

“Isn’t this done by music coordinators?”

“Yes. It requires the selection of songs that fit the retail store after analyzing the store. It’s a field that isn’t well known in Korea yet, but it’s very active in places like America. Music is important in shopping.”

“Hmm....”

KangYoon cautiously considered this. It wasn’t simply just choosing some background music for a store. It wasn’t just playing pop music one after the other. He would have to analyze the characteristics, sales, trends and various other elements and choose songs and test them as well. Not only that, he would even have to negotiate copyright if the store was big. It wasn’t a simple

issue.

“I think it’s a good stage for Team leader Lee to shine. What do you think?”

“It’s an unfamiliar field, but I think it will be interesting.”

“Good. Then can I expect some good results?”

“I’ll do my best.”

President Lee HyunJi replied with a smile at KangYoon’s acceptance.

Hallyeo Arts University department of composition was known to have difficult practical exams. While other universities had 300:1 competition rate, Hallyeo started at 500:1 minimum.

Park SoYoung challenged this difficult exam.

“‘I’m fine’? That’s a good title. Can you play it for us?”

Professor Choi ChanYang gestured a short girl who handed him the score. The girl, Park SoYoung, started singing with a guitar that was just as big as her.

“Even if you don’t acknowledge me – or find me – I’m fine –.”

The professors along with Professor Choi ChanYang was surprised after listening to the folk-song-like music. Her music was at a considerable level. No, the song and her voice matched very well. Professor Choi ChanYang especially seemed to have taken a liking to it, as he let her continue into the second verse.

“Thank you.”

“Well done.”

When Park SoYoung left, he started talking with the other professors.

“I’ll choose her.”

“I also like her.”

Under Professor Choi ChanYang’s lead, a ‘pass’ seal was stamped on Park SoYoung’s application.

KangYoon and a few other employees he had selected were headed to ‘DRO mart’ in Gangnam.

“It’s huge.”

Muttered vice-chief Yeon SooJin while looking at the large shoes retail store. 2 entire floors and being in Gangnam resulted in a lot of traffic. Not only her, everyone would be flabbergasted at the scale of the store and the population.

“Hello.”

“Welcome.”

When they went in, Owner Gu YoungSoo was waiting for them.

KangYoon and the others received the sales, customers per day, the floating population, and the music that was played at specific times from the owner before they walked around the store.

It was difficult to judge just from the music from the speakers. He could see various musical notes, but non-live, recorded music did not show him musical notes and light. It was the same as how light and musical notes disappears through media such as TV.

Since he couldn’t utilize his greatest weapon, KangYoon panicked at first. However, he couldn’t stay like that forever. He walked around the store among the customers that were looking at shoes and looked around.

“Chief Yoo, I don’t think the customers are staying for long.”

Chief Han SeYoung cautiously spoke. Chief Yoo GeunTae agreed.

“I think so too. Are all shoes retail stores like this?”

“They aren’t this bad. Shouldn’t they stay for at least 5 minutes

to do anything?”

Chief Han SeYoung specifically observed one customer. However, she could see that the person left after two minutes of looking around the store. Just in case, she observed other customers, and they were all the same. Not every single customer was like that, but many left before even 5 minutes had passed.

“Team leader.”

Chief Han SeYoung spoke out to KangYoon to tell him that.

“They aren’t staying here for long. Even though there seems to be no problem with the employees’ attitude....”

“The employees are all very nice.”

Chief Han SeYoung replied to KangYoon’s words. Although they couldn’t evaluate properly since this wasn’t their field, the employees were mostly very nice in handling customers.

KangYoon and the others looked for a lot of things while walking around the store. They could observe a lot of things when they walked around the store for the entire peak-hours. KangYoon gathered everyone to sum up what they had found.

“To put it simply, I think the music is indeed a problem. I can’t find any mistakes in other areas....”

“I think the same, Team leader.”

Chief Han SeYoung added to KangYoon’s words.

“We need to solve this from a musical vantage. The overall mood is very sunken and customers are leaving quickly.... The current selection of music is just ordinary pop music. Let’s first analyze the characteristics around the store, trends, and the preferences of the customers, and make a list.”

“Yes, Team leader.”

“Let us return then.”

Along with KangYoon's words, everyone hurriedly returned to their office. KangYoon was worried that he couldn't see any light, but he was still passionate.

‘Let's believe in my senses. I can do this.’

KangYoon resolved himself while going over a bridge inside a company car. This wouldn't be easy for him, but he found it joyful that he may develop himself further.

The first work of 2009 began like that.

Author's notes

Music coordination is a business that selects songs through the analysis of general data such as the mood of the store, the products sold in the store, the traits of customers and other various analysis of the market. Normally, it's large enough that there are specialized companies for it. However, I'm planning to use this element for a quick, clear progression and fun. It may differ from reality, so please excuse me if it is.

Chapter 67. Designing with Music (2)

After returning to his office, KangYoon gathered the materials he had collected from DRO mart. Then, he organized them one by one to think about the elements that were needed to select a song. Since he couldn't use his eyes, he put more mind into the objective information more than usual.

‘Selling shoes from many brands in one store. It can be considered as a department store of shoes. Its location is in one of the most popular places in Gangnam street. However, there are two more shoe stores right next to it. There are many people that go by due to the floating population, but the period of time they stay for is very little. As for eye shopping....’

Although this time, it was a store, the market analysis was similar to when planning for a singer. The difference in work field was large, but there were definitely some similarities as well. Thanks to that, KangYoon could proceed with his work quite smoothly.

However, there was a surprise. It was the general preferences of the people that came to look for shoes.

‘Many different people visit DRO mart. It's hard to look for their shared preferences. The age is very spread out, and the ratio of genders is relatively equal, while I don't know their general income. To compare it to a real department store, the store is too small. How can I choose the songs?’

He was worried in many ways. It was extremely easy if he just selected songs at random, but it was extremely difficult to do it properly. Since the song selection was the icing on the cake for the shoes retail store, it may lead to increase in sales, so it was even more pressure.

However, KangYoon kept analyzing DRO mart and looked for their strengths and weaknesses. Since he had experience in

analyzing singers, it was quite doable if he excluded the technical terms that came up here and there.

Having worked for a while, KangYoon headed to the rest area to cool his head off a little.

“Huh? Oppa.”

There was someone else there already. It was Kim JinGyung from TheACE.

“JinGyung.”

“It’s been a while. How have you been?”

Kim JinGyung seemed to be delighted to see KangYoon as her expression brightened. After they worked with KangYoon, they were doing well in whatever they did, so it was no wonder. The two sat down after a light greeting.

“It’s hard to see you at the company.”

“That’s true. You should come over to play sometime.”

“Don’t have the time. I always think about going, but when all schedule is over, it’s past midnight.”

Kim JinGyung looked happy as she talked about her busy life. She said that her life had been completely flipped over and boasted about what happened at some TV stations. KangYoon was also happy to see that she was doing well. He also talked about what he was doing nowadays. Kim JinGyung found the unfamiliar music coordination quite curious.

“Wow. Song selection affects sales? That’s interesting.”

“Right? The song sets the mood after all. I think of it as the same as a stage.”

“Aah, that’s true. Well, I heard that the song played in department stores are different at night than at day. I also don’t ever get tired when I shop at a department store.”

“Really? I feel my energy draining whenever I see a department store.”

“That’s because you’re weak.”

“What was that?”

When KangYoon was about to get angry at her retort, Kim JinGyung burst out laughing. KangYoon also accepted her words before switching to another topic.

“I thought about choosing songs similar to a department store, but I decided against it since it’s smaller than a department store. A department store has a resting zone, but the store I’ve looked at doesn’t have such a thing. Ah... it’s so hard.”

“It must be hard to think about many things. From what I heard just now, it’s not just choosing random songs. Well, if I think about it like that, then I guess you would have chosen a random song for us as well. We would have been doomed if it was like that.”

“Lol, I guess that’s true.”

Kim JinGyung bought KangYoon some chocolate to relieve some stress before she left. KangYoon also headed to the roof after seeing her out. He felt like he had to smoke some before working again.

He lighted his smoke on the rooftop. He felt like he relaxed a little after scattering some smoke.

‘Fuu. JinGyung found her place as well.’

He could still see Kim JinGyung’s face lingering in front of him. Her expression was very bright. The worried expression from before had completely disappeared without a trace. He got a little excited thinking about how he, KangYoon, was the one to make TheACE succeed like that.

‘When I think about it, TheACE also went with a completely

different theme from the existing ones. Wait.'

However, a thought flashed through KangYoon's head. TheACE went on the offensive with jazz, something that was not done in the past. To express it, it was a new type of weapon. If he could select a song that could be exclusively heard in that store alone....

'Yes, that's it!'

KangYoon put off his smoke and immediately went to his office.

The biggest issue in the first directors meeting in 2009 was Eddios.

As KangYoon went to work beyond the existing concert team and into the general music team, they judged that it would be difficult for him to work with Eddios simultaneously, so the hot topic in the directors meeting was about who would take charge of Eddios after him.

"Isn't Director Kang busy with raising the rookies right now? The work with Eddios must be immense. I don't think it will be easy for you to do it at the same time."

"Doesn't Director Yoon have no experience in taking charge of a girl idol group?"

The directors were all on the offensive. In their view, Eddios was a golden egg-laying duck. They considered that Eddios would become the greatest cash cow since the rise of TheACE. Everyone wanted to increase their voice in the company by showing achievements from Eddios.

There was no way Chairman Won JinMoon didn't know their intentions.

'Sheesh, your greed....'

Chairman Won JinMoon shook his head. This was also why he couldn't let them take care of JooAh or Min JinSeo. A basic

amount of desire was fine, but once it turned into greed, it would be no good. But that didn't mean that President Lee HyunJi was good either. She had to take care of the general music team along with KangYoon. However, the directors' gazes would pressure him if he took Eddios for himself as well. Even though he was the top of the food chain here, he had to consider the general opinion.

At that time, someone entered his eyes. It was director Lee HanSeo who hadn't shown up in directors meetings in a long time.

"Director Lee. Isn't TheACE preparing their album nowadays?"

"Yes. We're preparing a proper mini album this time."

"You participated despite being busy. How is it? Don't you want to take Eddios as well?"

All the directors shot gazes to Director Lee HanSeo when Chairman Won JinMoon said that.

"They are the product of Team leader Lee KangYoon's hard work. It's too much pressure for me. I wish to decline."

The other directors signed in relief when Director Lee HanSeo said that. He wasn't a greedy person and didn't have much presence either. Everyone knew that he wasn't just being polite. However, Chairman Won JinMoon gave him the hot potato.

"Good. You'll take them."

"What?"

The other directors' gazes all turned.

"You know Team leader Lee's burden. You should be able to maintain them well without doing irrational things."

"But Chairman, Director Lee is currently in charge of TheACE. If you let him work with Eddios as well, then...."

Along with Chairman Won JinMoon's words, the other directors all started objecting, but they were all put down. Director Lee HanSeo eventually accepted the Chairman's offer since his will was

firm. He was quite relaxed in the company without interfering much of the work, but he had to dive into work now that he had to take care of Eddios on top of TheACE.

‘....Out of all things, it’s work.’

Being glared at by the other directors, he only sighed thinking that his tea time will decrease.

Selecting music for the store.

The team members of the general music team experienced a lot of trial and error since this was their first time. They showed great know-how in analyzing the preferences of the masses and finding trends, but with the ‘product sales’ variable in the mix, it wasn’t so easy.

KangYoon first started by getting the current song selection at DRO mart. When he analyzed the song selection, he discovered that the sales differed according to which song was played at which times. After that, KangYoon first test-picked a few songs that might help the current trend and sales using that data. Then, he had meetings with the team members before selecting songs again. This process was repeated.

Like that, the days passed and it came the day where they had to report to Owner Gu YoungSoo. KangYoon headed to DRO mart in Gangnam with President Lee HyunJi. It was just after lunchtime, and about the time when many people had coffee. KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi headed to a nearby café with Owner Gu YoungSoo.

“Oho.”

Owner Gu Young exclaimed in a small voice after seeing the papers given to him by KangYoon. It was definitely different from when he randomly selected songs from a music streaming site before.

“There are recent songs and songs that are a year old.... Hey, isn’t this a little too old?”

Even a song from three years ago was on the list. Owner Gu YoungSoo was worried that it was too behind the latest trend, but KangYoon answered his worries.

“Although it’s a little old, I judged that there was no better song than this to switch the mood. The song list here was targeted towards workers who come at the evening peak time. I tried to make it as comfortable as possible for them while looking around the products.”

“Comfort.... If that’s the case, a slower song might be better, though....”

There were dance songs and songs that had easy rhythms. However, there were strangely no slow songs like a ballad, so Owner Gu YoungSoo expressed his doubts. KangYoon replied while showing him a graph.

“If you look at here, the number of customers is the highest at evening rush hour. However, the majority of these customers leave within 3 minutes. I have analyzed the songs that were played at this time. The first day, it was ‘Spring Shower’, second day, it was ‘Spreading of dawn’, the third day was ‘ring’, and the fourth day was ‘Yes, it’s here’. The first two days had slower songs while the third and fourth days had faster tempo songs.

“Do you mean that customers leave earlier when there’s a slower song? I think there must be other variables though. This....”

On KangYoon’s graph, the sales and the number of customers decreased when a slow-tempo song was being played. Although it was hard to see, it was quite considerable. Owner Gu YoungSoo never seemed to have imagined that he would see data like this, and could not hide his surprise. He didn’t know music could have such power.

KangYoon added to his explanation.

“This value here is largely simplified. I have considered all the other variables, such as customer service, and other elements to be equal across all days. Please excuse us for only being able to speak in a musical vantage.”

“That’s true.”

“This time, we’re trying to reinforce this list and try it out for 3 days. If you would also like additional service, we are planning to rearrange some of the songs that will be played in the store.”

“Rearrange? What’s that?”

“It’s the editing of music to be more comfortable to the ears. Of course, we’ll do the negotiations with the original composer. It will be the same song, but it will be an exclusive version of the song for this store.”

“Oho.”

To put it simply, it was a specialized service. When it switched to about money, Owner Gu YoungSoo turned around to President Lee HyunJi.

“HyunJi. How much does it cost?”

“You’re the first customer, oppa, so we are willing to discount 30%.”

“Oho, that sounds good. I’ll do it right away. Day, evening peak, and weekend peak time for a total of 3 songs.”

Owner Gu YoungSoo didn’t think about it anymore and immediately signed the contract.

After that, KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi talked about any additional things before leaving the café. Since Owner Gu YoungSoo said that there was no problem with the test trial of the songs list, they could move up their schedule a lot as well. KangYoon decided that they would start the trial from the next day

before they scattered.

The next day.

Owner Gu YoungSoo played the music that MG Entertainment had sent them.

“Owner? This music. It has a good quality.”

One male employee was pleasantly surprised after hearing the good quality music than the usual streaming service music.

“This was expensive you know? This much is natural.”

“Is this some lossless music? Man, that audio quality is good.”

The male employee, who always found it unfortunate that the expensive speakers weren't used to their full potential, talked about how the speakers finally found their right place. Hearing that, Owner Gu YoungSoo felt satisfied at MG Entertainment's service.

‘It does its money's worth.’

He felt satisfied feeling that they put care into every single detail.

The store opened and the songs played. It started with the latest trending music, but the mood was heightened with the older songs. If it was the fun and exciting music that mainly composed the music before, there were much relaxing but still enjoyable music right now.

“Hey, this music is good. What is it?”

“This is from a few years ago. What was it again? I can't remember. I used to love this song.”

Even the customers who just stopped by for a moment reacted to the song. There were many eye shoppers, but the period of time they stayed was definitely different than before.

On the first day, Owner Gu YoungSoo was definitely satisfied with the changed music.

On the second day and third day, their period of stay was even longer. The proof was that the customers per employee had increased. Also, the number of customers who went to purchase had increased as well.

‘Whew.... All this happened because of a simple change in background music?’

Owner Gu YoungSoo was surprised even after seeing the results. However, it was too early to rejoice. It had only been three days.

On the fourth day, he could feel that the mood of the store had definitely changed. The actions of the employees were changing now.

“Welcome to DRO. How may I help you?”

“I came to look at some high-heels.”

“This way please....”

Owner Gu YoungSoo felt that the employees had become nicer as well. Even the employee who was mostly expressionless before was now taking care of a customer with a smile. Not only that, the so-called ‘nasty customers’ had decreased in number as well for the past few days.

“Should we leave?”

“No, let’s stay a little more.”

Listening to the conversation between two lady customers who had been here for more than one hour, Owner Gu YoungSoo could definitely see the change. This had become the norm over the past few days. It seemed like people had called for more people, and the number of customers kept increasing.

After the fourth day, it became the fifth, the last day of the trial.

Just as Owner Gu YoungSoo was about to play the music after registering the employees, his phone started vibrating. It was a call from KangYoon. When he asked what was up, he heard that

KangYoon would come to the store.

“Are you coming in the evening?”

– Yes. I need to see the results. Also, I’ll bring you the songs we talked about last time.”

“Oh, the song exclusive to the store? Are you talking about that?”

– Yes. You should be satisfied. Then I’ll see you in the evening.

Owner Gu YoungSoo waited for the evening expectantly.

After lunchtime at around 4:30, KangYoon arrived at DRO mart. KangYoon immediately handed him a USB and looked around the store.

“There are a lot of people.”

“The effects of the change in music is definitely showing. The period of time they are staying has definitely increased.”

“That’s very fortunate. By next week, we’ll finish the rearrangement and give you the completed list.”

Owner Gu YoungSoo was satisfied with the increase in customers and the better mood in the store. KangYoon was also surprised to see the change within the past week. Before, the store had fewer customers than the other rivals and there were many that left quickly, but right now, he had a hard time finding any of that.

When he was looking around the store, the clock tilted towards 6. The people in the store started increasing. It was peak time.

“Should we start?”

It became time. KangYoon played the store-exclusive song that was in the USB.

Chapter 68. Designing with Music (3)

– I never thought I could live – without you – but day by—

A song from the male idol group, ‘Twain’, who sung nightclub-style songs a lot, started flowing out into the store. However, it was different from the original’s electric beat. An acoustic guitar, drums, and bass produced a rich sound and emphasized the voice.

“Wow, isn’t this ‘Monsoon’? Was there such a version?”

“The song is so good.”

The female customers reacted first. Twain was very popular originally, but this kind of a song was a first. Normally, they would not think about a song they heard while shopping, but they noticed it when they heard such a characteristic song.

The reaction from the male customers wasn’t so bad either.

“This is a decent song. Aren’t these guys the ones that always hop around on stage?”

“I know, right?”

The reactions from couples were good as well. Of course, the man’s side showed slight jealousy sometimes. The customers inside the store enjoyed their time picking shoes while listening to the music. Even the people who came in relaxed and closed their eyes to enjoy the music.

“The reactions are quite good.”

When Owner Gu YoungSoo rejoiced at the reactions of customers, KangYoon also agreed, However, he was heaving a sigh of relief inwardly. He had a hard time because he couldn’t see musical notes or light. However, he had brought about a good result through detailed information and trends analysis. This was worth his effort.

The list of songs completely finished, and Twain’s song started

being played again.

“Huh? There it is again.”

“You’re right.”

The customers who were looking around for shoes for a long time reacted again. The long-time shoppers immediately realized the song. The store started being filled with new customers and the customers that didn’t leave. Although the number of customers had increased over the past few days, it couldn’t be compared to now.

“Excuse me.”

“Yes! I’m on my way.”

Thanks to that, the employees had a hard time. Even some of the customers who purchased some items didn’t immediately leave and kept looking around. The employees sweated despite it being in the middle of winter, but they tried their best to provide good service.

Owner Gu YoungSoo couldn’t hide his surprise after looking at this scene.

“It’s the first time I see so many customers since the opening of the store....”

KangYoon only smiled while looking at the store that was becoming full.

Even when the store was nearing its closing hours, there was a considerable number of customers. In the end, only after the employees guided them out did they leave reluctantly.

“Let’s clean up after eating.”

“Thank you!”

Owner Gu YoungSoo treated the employees to some pizza as they

had a hard time today. Today's sales were immense. Thanks to the treat, the employees also felt as though their fatigue was drained down.

“Please have some.”

“Thank you.”

KangYoon also had some pizza. He didn't even have time to eat dinner properly as he had to observe the store all the time. He could hear his stomach resenting him.

Owner Gu YoungSoo smiled after lifting the pizza and cola in his hand.

“It's the best day of my life. I wish it could be like this every day.”

“It will only become better and better.”

“Of course, of course.”

Owner Gu YoungSoo was the type to get swept up by the mood. He toasted with the coke and raised the morale of the employees. He even gave them some bonus for today's work.

KangYoon fell into thought after looking at today's sales.

‘So, it's time to advertise now; that the song can only be heard here.’

Seeing Owner Gu YoungSoo smiling at the profit, KangYoon's head spun around to calculate many things.

– What is this person – I can't stop – the love –

Professor Choi ChangYang was currently watching a band video on his phone. He put his earphones on and paid attention to each of the melodies.

The video ended, and he gave the phone back to Lee HyunAh.

“The song came out well. I like it.”

“Thank you, professor.”

“At this level, I think you can record it now. I feel good about it. It’s very leisurely, but still, doesn’t drag out.”

Lee HyunAh felt good after hearing Professor Choi ChanYang’s compliment. Although he was always gentle, he always spoke what had to be spoken.

“I’m planning to record soon. I still have some of the money from the prize, and the members also like the song.”

“And there’s someone to do the producing?”

“Not yet.... Would it be a bother for you to do it, professor?”

“Okay, if it’s my student’s request.... But not for free, okay?”

“Thank you.”

Lee HyunAh rejoiced. The renting of a studio was a problem, but hiring an engineer was also incredibly expensive. Professor Choi ChanYang’s help was a great deal.

“Invite Mr. KangYoon when you record.”

“Yes. I was going to invite him anyway. It’s my first work, of course, he has to be there.”

“He’ll probably like it.”

Professor Choi ChanYang made a satisfied smile while looking at Lee HyunAh’s music score.

KangYoon, Composer Loin, and another MG-exclusive composer Won HeeJin were currently sweating due to last-minute work.

“The feel isn’t right....”

Composer Loin felt quite distant about Composer Won HeeJin’s rearrangement and commented on it. Composer Won HeeJin deleted the original number 231 sound and added number 430 sound to mix it again, but the reaction was still the same.

“It doesn’t come alive. HeeJin, why don’t we go for a fancier sound?”

“To make it feel ampler?”

“You know, the song sounds like it’s dragging out. The time this song will be played is at noon on weekends. We can’t make them listen to such a slow beat in the middle of the day. Let’s raise it a little more.”

“Okay.”

Composer Won HeeJin kept looking for a sound. However, she couldn’t avoid being lectured by Composer Loin.

KangYoon watched the women’s work quietly. Rearranging a perfectly good song to make it feel different wasn’t easy. The perfectly white sound from before the rearrangement was turning into a gloomy gray.

“This is no good even to you, is it?”

“You’re right....”

They were doing this for a few hours now. However, they were squeezing their brains since they couldn’t find a satisfying song.

“What about this?”

Composer Won HeeJin eventually put sound number 500 and asked with a tired expression, and Composer Loin nodded saying this much was fine. However, the next boss was waiting for the two.

“Isn’t there another sound? This sounds uselessly grand to me.”

“.....”

Composer Won HeeJin felt like crying. However, KangYoon also had his reasons.

‘It’s slightly gray.’

KangYoon thought that the bare minimum was bright white

light. A song like this was doomed to fail.

Composer Won HeeJin felt her body lagging as more time had passed. She had heard that KangYoon's team had strict work standards. However, she didn't know that he would be so strict.

"Should we rest for a little?"

Even so, KangYoon declared rest at suitable times. It was the exact time when she thought that she needed some water. KangYoon went up to the rooftop, and the two composers were left on their own in the studio.

"I did hear the rumors, but it sure is tiring to work with Team leader Lee."

Composer Loin sighed while gulping down the cold coffee in one shot. She disagreed with her junior's words.

"It is indeed tiring, but this place is the greatest bonanza in MG."

"I know that.... But it's still hard."

"Where is easy work? But all of that feeling would go away once you see the money on your bank account at the end of the month."

Thinking about the upcoming salary, Composer Won HeeJin decided that she would put her best effort again.

KangYoon came back down from the rooftop and work began again. The process of looking for sound started again. Even Composer Loin, who had observed in order to educate her junior until now, participated in the work.

"How is this?"

KangYoon shook his head after listening to the organ-like sound that Composers Loin and Won HeeJin had arrived at. The two women kept looking for a new sound and eventually found a suitable one. At a glance, it sounded like a piano, but a splendid music came out when played with the rearranged music.

"Let's go with this."

KangYoon finally approved. It was way past work hours. The two composers hugged each other and rejoiced.

After the work was over and they made the music source file, their boring work had finally finished.

“Thanks for your work.”

KangYoon left the studio first. Composer Loin stayed behind in the studio saying she had to teach her junior a little more using the music they made today. Composer Won HeeJin grabbed on to KangYoon asking for help, but she immediately succumbed after seeing Composer Loin’s glare.

When KangYoon left, it was already deep into the night. Just as he hurried to the station, he received a message. It was a message from Lee HyunAh.

– The song is finished. ^.^ Please give me your e-mail address.

She wanted to give him the score through e-mail. KangYoon sent her his e-mail address.

After returning home, KangYoon turned on the computer and had a look at his inbox. HeeYoon was next to him.

“A video?”

HeeYoon showed great curiosity and stuck next to KangYoon. When he played back the video, Lee HyunAh and the band started playing the song. Although the resolution wasn’t that good, the audio was not that bad. HeeYoon showed interest at the girl’s voice in the video.

“That’s a nice song. What’s it called?”

“It’s titled ‘Do you have some time?’. The girl that’s singing made the song.”

“That unni did? Hm? I think I saw her somewhere before. It’s the unni from the College Pop Festival, isn’t she?”

“Yup. She sent me a song she made herself. I helped her a little.”

“Really? You helped her make that song?”

HeeYoon’s eyes flashed. KangYoon was surprised to see her interest in composition but still replied.

“Yeah, why?”

“Nothing. Are you composing already, oppa? That’s amazing.”

“I only gave her a few pieces of advice. She practically did all the work. Is the song good?”

“It’s really good. Are they making that into an album?”

“She’ll probably send a recording to a management company or something if she wanted to make an album. I’m thinking that she’ll probably act in ‘Under’. You know, like Hongdae.”

“Ooh.” (T/N: Under is underside, basically where indie bands play their music)

HeeYoon seems to be incited by the video as she played the video repeatedly. When KangYoon stood up from his seat, she even sat down in his place and focused on the video.

‘Was HeeYoon interested in things like this?’

KangYoon was surprised to see HeeYoon’s intense concentration. However, he did know that his sister was showing interest in music lately. However, he seriously considered letting her sister do music properly since she was so interested in it.

The night flowed like that for the siblings.

The day finally came.

KangYoon headed to DRO mart with the final selection of his songs. Today, President Lee HyunJi was with him. When they arrived, Owner Gu YoungSoo even personally brought them coffee to greet them. His attitude was completely different to when they first brought the song selection.

In a small office inside the store, the three conversed lightly.

“It will start for real today.”

Last week was just a test. Owner Gu YoungSoo looked at KangYoon expectantly after hearing that this was the real deal.

“The song that was only played in our store, it’s included in there, right?”

“Yes. However, you must be cautious of one thing. Please play the music in the exact order, and educate the staff so that they don’t touch the music program.”

“Understood.”

KangYoon told him a few other words of caution. He also told him to send him the sales in units of weeks, as well as any other request if there were any. Owner Gu YoungSoo said that he was worried about the discount sales period that would begin the next Friday, and KangYoon relieved him by saying that he put that into consideration.

“...That’s it.”

“Good, very good. This is enough.”

“Then I’ll have a look around the store.”

When KangYoon left the office, President Lee HyunJi and Owner Gu YoungSoo were left on their own.

“HyunJi, that guy’s work is no joke. I like how everything snaps into place.”

“He’s a rising star in our industry. Wait no, I guess it’s too late to call him a ‘rising’ star now. Anyway, do you like it?”

“Such a young man, and he’s so amazing. I can trust in him. Grab onto that guy, HyunJi.”

“Of course I will.”

“Oho, will I get an invitation soon?”

“What the hell are you saying. I’ll kill you.”

Perhaps he did it unintentionally, or maybe he did it intentionally, but either way, Owner Gu YoungSoo felt a threat to his life when President Lee HyunJi gripped her fist and backed out.

KangYoon looked around the store where the final song selection was being played and saw various things.

The reaction to the songs was very good. The number of visitors was increasing thanks to the fact that some bloggers had mentioned that this store had its exclusive song. Some of the nearby stores even put their own employees in disguise to feel them out.

Today was the day when all three of the exclusive songs would be played. Today was Saturday when it became peak hours after 2 p.m., the first exclusive song played.

“Huh? Isn’t this that song?”

“I think it’s slightly changed. But it sure sounds good.”

The song that was played in the store was a song from 3 years ago. ‘We are in love’. It was a very popular song sung by the three-member singer group, Sereny. However, it was rearranged a little, and it gave a slightly leisurely feeling than the fancy feeling from the original.

“Sereny, these girls sing well. Did they put out an album?”

“What are you saying? They disbanded ages ago.”

People also sometimes talked about Sereny. All the people that visited the store talked about Sereny at least once. After a round of songs, the store-exclusive songs played again. And every time, at least a few people showed a reaction. There were even some people who stayed in the store to listen to the music.

“Oho.”

President Lee HyunJi and Owner Gu YoungSoo came out as well.

They were happy to see the store full of people at peak hours; especially more so when they saw a line at the checkout counter.

“Looks like I’ll earn some pretty sum today.”

“You’re treating?”

“Of course.”

Owner Gu YoungSoo put his thumbs up.

The staff had a hard time thanks to the onrush of customers at peak hours. Owner Gu YoungSoo handed out energy bars to encourage them. Like that, the second peak hours arrived.

“It looks like you need to be there too.”

“.....”

President Lee HyunJi playfully pushed Owner Gu YoungSoo’s back. The store was so full of people that it was crowded. He even had the resting employees to work, but even they couldn’t fill in the gaps, so it was his turn to do the work as well.

President Lee HyunJi headed to KangYoon who was at the counter.

“How is it?”

“I think the sales are alright. The song selection also doesn’t feel bad.”

Said KangYoon while comparing the current sales and the sales from last week. The graph KangYoon was holding on to showed that today’s sales were higher than last weeks at the same hours. President Lee HyunJi switched the topic in satisfaction.

“Is it because of the song exclusive to the store? The people aren’t showing signs of leaving.”

President Lee HyunJi watched the people who were absorbed into the second store-exclusive song, ‘Look at only one’. This was a song from a male hip-hop duo from half a year ago. However,

adding a few sounds after changing the beat faster made it a completely new rhythmical and exciting song.

However, time still passed, and it passed very fast even while the customers called out to the staff here and there. The war zone like day had finally come to an end.

“Uerrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrh.....”

After locking the doors to the store, Owner Gu YoungSoo and the other staff all collapsed onto the ground.

“Hey.... Go home. Forget about cleaning.... Let’s do it tomorrow....”

“Yees.....”

Today was the highest record for the number of customers they had, so it was impossible to do any cleaning. Owner Gu YoungSoo told the staff to go home after finishing off the work with the POS device. Then, he had a look at today’s sales through the sales management table.

“Whoa!?”

And his jaws dropped. When KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi approached to see it, he hugged the two and shouted.

“It’s..... the highest..... It’s the highest profit since ever!”

KangYoon didn’t feel so great being hugged by a man, but for now, it was okay. He smiled in satisfaction of his work.

Chapter 69. His First Song is a Hurricane?

(1)

A holiday.

KangYoon had met up with Professor Choi ChanYang to learn harmonics.

It was thanks to Professor Choi saying that he would teach him even during the holidays.

“You’ve come quite far. Major, minor, and diminished.... It looks like there’s no problem with your scales anymore.”

“Thank you.”

The lecture in the café was very fun. Professor Choi ChanYang smoothly led KangYoon on the right track. Thanks to that, KangYoon could learn music theory to his heart’s content as though a sponge absorbing water.

“Should we rest for a little?”

When KangYoon raised his head, the sun was already setting. When he focused, time flew quickly. Using this rest time, Professor Choi ChanYang started talking about the recent news.

“You’re like normal, Mr. KangYoon. Busy, and then busy again....”

“It’s just that type of work. Don’t you know that this industry requires a lot of hands?”

“I guess that’s true. Especially if you’re someone high like Mr. KangYoon.”

KangYoon nodded his head.

The two had become quite close to each other and talked about many things. Professor Choi ChanYang said that he watched anime as a hobby. KangYoon felt as though he saw a new world to find

out that Professor Choi liked something entirely different from what he looked like on the surface, a gentleman.

When they were about to start studying again, Professor Choi's phone started ringing. He left the café to get the call.

When KangYoon was going through his textbook, Professor Choi came back.

"HyunAh wants to come here. What should we do?"

"I'm okay with it."

He felt like he saw HyunAh quite frequently recently, but he was fine with it. Professor Choi told her through the phone and ended the call.

Not long after the two started studying again, Lee HyunAh came. On her back was a large guitar. After a simple exchange of greetings, Lee HyunAh took out a score.

"It's the score for the song last time."

"Oh, that one. That song was great."

KangYoon was honest. In his ears, the song wasn't bad at all. Professor Choi ChanYang also agreed to that.

"Didn't you say that you were going to record it?"

"Yes. It'll be this Wednesday. At seven in the evening."

"Okay."

Professor Choi ChanYang took out a memo and wrote the time on it. KangYoon also remembered the promise and wrote the time on his phone.

"Please come."

After getting an agreement from the two, Lee HyunAh took out her guitar. She tapped on the guitars saying she'll let them listen to a song she composed. Along with the clean guitar sounds, her voice started flowing out into the café.

“Whooo—I can’t help but fall in love—all day – I — “

The musical note from the guitar and from Lee HyunAh herself combined to create white light. The light was very bright. KangYoon clapped lightly and reacted to her. She seemed to be encouraged by the claps as she put more power into playing the guitar.

“My heart is on that ticking clock— “

The few customers in the café also looked at KangYoon’s trio. Everyone was showing interest at the sudden live-show. Professor Choi ChanYang was tapping his foot lightly to enjoy and KangYoon became a loyal audience by clapping. Their table was like a small stage.

The song ended, and Lee HyunAh shyly lowered her head.

“How was it?”

“It was good.”

That was his honest opinion: It was a good song. He thought that the song fits her voice well.

“It’s thanks to you that I could make this song, oppa.”

“I don’t remember doing much.”

“You made the melody here at this part, though.”

Lee HyunAh pointed at the score. When she pointed at the melody line and the bass line in the third and fourth bars, KangYoon smiled awkwardly.

“It’s only because you helped out. I know nothing....”

“Creating melodies are extremely difficult you know? It’s only thanks to you that I could compose a good song, oppa. I’m planning to put your name as the co-composer. Will that be alright with you?”

This was an official request. When KangYoon pondered

seriously, Professor Choi ChanYang spoke to him.

“Mr. KangYoon. Is it because of your company?”

“No, it’s not that. The company won’t interfere with personal lives after all.”

“Isn’t it fine then?” Creating your own song isn’t just doable by anyone.”

KangYoon fell into thought after hearing that. His ‘own song’ provoked him a little.

“...Okay, put it in there then.”

“Okay. I’ll make it into a good song so that it won’t tarnish your name.”

She was full of resolve for some reason. KangYoon shook his hands saying that it was too pressuring for him, but she didn’t change her attitude.

Having successfully finished his work with DRO Mart, KangYoon wrapped up his work and gave it to the business team. He made the important decisions, but things like analysis were now handled by a specialized team. With the success of this job, a new department was created in the company, and that leads to new profits.

KangYoon headed to the chairman’s office to report about the DRO mart.

“I knew I could count on you for the new job. It must have been quite unfamiliar, were you okay with it?”

“I did it with the mindset that I will learn new things. It’s fortunate that things went well.”

Chairman Won JinMoon slowly sipped on the coffee. He felt his body relaxing as the warm coffee went down his throat. He asked KangYoon with a smile that was as comfortable as his body.

“Okay. What about your next work?”

“I have heard that it’s still under progress.”

“Hm.... President Lee still has some ways to go.”

“I heard that it’s hard to find suitable work even though there are many offers. After all, we need to do something that’s profitable.”

KangYoon stood up for President Lee HyunJi. Then, Chairman Won JinMoon agreed and switched topics.

“Hm... well, I’ll find out in the next report. So, you’ll be resting for a while?”

“The coordinator work keeps coming in so I’ll be doing those.”

“Okay then.”

After the conversation with Chairman Won JinMoon, KangYoon left the chairman’s office.

‘I wonder what the next one would be?’

KangYoon was curious about it as well. President Lee HyunJi was currently working away from the office to get a good work offer, so it would be bad to call her now.

Before he returned to his own office, KangYoon headed to the resting room to cool off a little. However, there was someone already there. It was Jung MinAh.

“MinAh.”

“Huh? Ahjussi.”

“You really....”

“...Team leader.”

When KangYoon was about to get angry, Jung MinAh lowered her tail. However, she immediately became full of vitality and approached KangYoon. She was the type that was hard to hate.

KangYoon bought her some snacks and sat down together.

“How is it nowadays?”

“Oh, it’s hard. There’s a lot of work, but no rest.... I wish there was a Jung MinAh-robot.”

“Consider yourselves lucky. Celebrities without any schedules sometimes get suicidal thoughts.”

“Sheesh, can’t you even console me....”

Grumbled Jung MinAh. When KangYoon raised his fist, she immediately moved away.

“What are you doing nowadays, Team leader? Don’t you feel great now that you don’t have to take care of us anymore?”

“Yep.”

“Hey, really?!”

KangYoon’s joke made Jung MinAh’s expression change immediately. When KangYoon said that it was a joke, she still got mad at him. Jung MinAh was the kind of girl that needed quite a bit of care, but precisely because of that, she was the closest to him out of all the girls of Eddios.

“Some people called DiaTeen debuted at Yoonseul. And I think they’re always on guard against us.”

“They’re from a rival company after all. Perhaps they’re feeling a sense of rivalry?”

“Who cares about rivalry nowadays? We’re all singers. Anyway, I don’t like them. They don’t come around for a greeting and hand out albums, and... oh yeah, they do seem to have quite a few fans. At first, I thought they were some unknown twats....”

“What’s a twat?”

KangYoon didn’t know the slang word and tilted his head. Jung MinAh explained to him that it was a derogatory term. He warned

her to never use the word in public and Jung MinAh told him that there's no way she would. They were actually on good terms with each other.

“...Anyway, they're nagging my mind nowadays. They're always there when we try to appear on TV.”

“It's just in the TV station, right?”

“Yes. Hey, they would be stalkers if they followed us to events....”

Jung MinAh shivered saying that it was frightening to just think about it.

While they were talking, Jung MinAh stood up saying that it was time to go.

“Then I'll be going to another event then.”

“Be careful on your way.”

After sending her off, KangYoon headed to his office as well. Although he had much more time than before, he still had some work to do.

The day of Lee HyunAh's recording came.

KangYoon finished off his work and headed to a recording studio nearby Hongdae where Lee HyunAh would be recording today. Since he only had the address, it took him some time to find it.

“Hello.”

When KangYoon entered a shabby basement, Lee HyunAh and the other members all greeted him. At a glance, they exuded the aura of ‘musicians’. KangYoon also took out some meals after greeting them. Among everyone's cheers, KangYoon left an impression on them as the ‘snack uncle’.

After a simple meal, the recording began. Professor Choi

ChanYang adjusted the instrumental sounds, as well as Lee HyunAh's microphone. Although this took a considerable amount of time, he did this properly.

“Studio renting is expensive though....”

“It's fine. This is all an investment.”

“That's true, but still....”

Kim JinDae, the drums, spoke worriedly, but Lee HyunAh was actually cool with it. She told everyone that investment was a must for a good song, and got an agreement from all of them.

“Okay, let's begin.”

Along with Professor Choi ChanYan's words, everyone including Lee HyunAh gave him the OK signal. With four beats from the drumsticks, the recording began.

“Perhaps I might be busy today – and tomorrow's no good either –.”

When the song began, musical notes started appearing in front of KangYoon as well.

‘Not bad.’

The musical notes from the electric guitar and the synthesizer were added to the drums and the bass. When Lee HyunAh's voice was added to it, a white light was released. It wasn't a bad light. KangYoon could imagine Lee HyunAh's playing of the acoustic guitar at the café overlapping her.

‘It feels similar to that time.’

The song was definitely good, but he felt like it lacked impact. The song progressed from the introduction to the middle part, but not the climax. It had to reach the peak, but KangYoon felt that it fell down before it could go up and shook his head.

“How is it?”

When Professor Choi ChanYang asked that, KangYoon shook his head instead of answering. Professor Choi also seemed to think the same and didn't say much about it. He gave a glance to KangYoon though. KangYoon immediately voiced out his opinion.

“I think you don't have any impact. The instrumental-kind of feeling is good, but there's no ups and downs in the song.”

– Oh, really? Should we raise the volume in the ‘weekend’ part?

“Why don't we go with another tone for the guitar? Right now, it's the clean tone. Let's go with another sound.”

When Lee HyunAh asked as the representative, KangYoon talked about the necessary things. Jung ChanKyu, the electric guitar player, controlled the effector to change the tone.

“Would you like to sit here?”

Professor Choi ChanYang yielded the center seat of the mixer to KangYoon. KangYoon shook his hand saying that he couldn't do this, but Professor Choi ChanYang still urged him on anyway.

“I'll teach you. Just try it once. I heard you can do the basics.”

“I don't have any experience doing it for a real recording though.”

“You have a knack for it so you'll do well.”

KangYoon eventually sat in front of the mixer instead of Professor Choi ChanYang. There was nothing easy since there were 48 channels on the mixer and the program on the computer was in English. However, Professor Choi ChanYang explained each one of them and encouraged KangYoon.

When everyone inside the booth gave the ok signal, KangYoon gave them the signal to start.

– Perhaps I might be busy today – and tomorrow's no good either
– Seeing musical notes coming out of everyone, he started adjusting the machine. The first thing he adjusted was the drums.

When he isolated the drums with the headset, it was quite sharp. KangYoon started decreasing the high tone from the microphone that was placed in front of the cymbals.

“Mr. KangYoon, you decreased it too much.”

“Ah....”

However, Professor Choi ChanYang spoke to him the next moment. The machine was sensitive so it changed drastically even from a little tweaking. KangYoon minutely adjusted the sounds.

“You see the effector here, right?”

“Yes. It’s the echo and the delay. What is this?”

KangYoon tweaked on the mixer while listening to the sounds and the advice from Professor Choi ChanYang.

Like that, the second recording ended.

– How was it this time?

When Lee HyunAh asked for his opinion, KangYoon shook his head, saying that it wasn’t time yet.

“I’m sorry, it’s my first time on the mixer.”

– If it’s you, well... we’ll do it again.

Lee HyunAh didn’t say anything anymore as she trusted in KangYoon. The other members also didn’t say anything since she didn’t. This time, KangYoon recorded verse by verse.

– Perhaps I might be busy today –

KangYoon was busy. He had to look at the musical notes and tweak the machine as well. However, he also found it more comfortable since he could do everything now without telling someone else to do it. When he saw that Lee HyunAh’s musical note dimmed the light a little instead, KangYoon stopped the song.

“Let’s do that again, the sound was too weak.”

– Yes.

In the retry, a strong white light came out. He tried it one more time just in case, and the results were the same. KangYoon went on to the next verse in satisfaction.

“I want to give this part a slight echoing effect here, what do I need to do?”

“To do that, you....”

Professor Choi ChanYang put his best effort to advise KangYoon.

Like that, Lee HyunAh and KangYoon’s song was being completed bit by bit.

The recording ended and when they left the studio, it was way past midnight. Everyone had to get a taxi because there was no public transport.

“Thank you for your work.”

The members each took a taxi. Today’s recording went well so everyone was in great spirits.

“Bye.”

“See you at practice.”

Lee HyunAh sent the members away first. She told them that the leader had to go last and made everyone laugh as well.

When the members and Professor Choi ChanYang left, only KangYoon and Lee HyunAh were left.

“We should go too.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon came to the roadside to hail a taxi, but strangely, none came. Lee HyunAh approached him.

“I can’t see any taxi.”

“It will come soon.”

Unlike his words, no taxis stopped by. It was strange. While KangYoon was looking out for a taxi, Lee HyunAh approached KangYoon.

“Oppa.”

“What is it?”

“Uh... can I ask you something?”

KangYoon nodded his head without any word. Lee HyunAh, unlike her usual self, asked him very cautiously and shyly.

“Uhm.... Do you perhaps... have a girlfriend?”

KangYoon was stunned by the sudden question from HyunAh.

Chapter 70. His First Song is a Hurricane?

(2)

“Ah.... No, I don’t mean anything special by it....”

Lee HyunAh panicked at her own unexpected offense.

It was past midnight, and the road was empty. Only the sound of cars swooshing by could be heard. Shy expression, reddened face. KangYoon felt strange after hearing those words.

“I.... Oh, the taxi’s here.”

Just as KangYoon was about to reply, the taxi arrived. It was perfect timing.

“I’ll go first then.”

Lee HyunAh got into the taxi as fast as possible. She immediately told the driver her destination and waved at KangYoon.

“Be careful on your way home. And do send me an album if you make one.”

“Yes. Then I’ll be on my way.”

Lee HyunAh acting like it was nothing was more awkward. Like that, she would probably kick the seat on her way home.... Imagining such a scene, KangYoon felt that she was cute.

KangYoon also grabbed another taxi and went home.

‘A girlfriend, a lover, eh.... I still don’t know yet.’

KangYoon smiled in bitterness after thinking that. Now, he started getting more room financially, but he still had many things to do. He also had to take care of HeeYoon’s matter, and he also thought that his work was also not stable yet. Matters about lovers was still too early for him.

‘Fuu....’

Driving through the night Han river, the taxi he was on headed to his house.

“Chief, have a look at this.”

Vice-chief Yoon MinSeo, who was selected from the PR team for KangYoon’s projects, called for Chief Oh ChaeSung, who was likewise called into the team. Chief Oh ChaeSung approached her with questions on his face.

“What is it?”

“You know about the DRO Mart thing? It went up on a blog.”

“Let’s see. Isn’t this guy a power-blogger? With 100,000 views a day?”

“Yes, it was posted on the site as a shoe store with good music.”

The blog paid attention to the fact that some of the songs could only be heard from the store. The blog also put a 1-minute preview of the song with Owner Gu YoungSoo’s approval and many visitors were pressing ‘recommended’.

“This is good. Are there any other places?”

“It’s also spreading around on social media sites. Should we do it as well?”

“No, if we do it, we might be flagged as advertisers so let’s just keep watching. Just don’t let any bad rumors spread around.”

“Okay.”

Vice-chief Yoon MinSeo accepted her orders and did her work.

While the team members were doing their work, KangYoon entered; his hands full of sushi.

“Let’s eat first.”

It was 5 p.m. Everyone knew that they were going to work overtime today, and they rejoiced. They all ate the sushi in the

meeting room.

While eating, KangYoon asked Chief Oh ChaeSung.

“I’ve heard that rumors about DRO Mart are circulating around the web.”

“The fact that there is music which could only be heard from that store is becoming a hot issue. There are even famous blogs where they give out 1-minute previews.”

“That sounds nice. For now, keep a look out on things. Let’s try to finish up by 8 today.”

“Yes!”

After a light meal, and when everyone was about to get up, KangYoon spoke.

“There will be special bonuses this month. It will be quite good.”

“Yeeeeees!”

Everyone cheered at KangYoon’s blessing.

After everyone went home, KangYoon visited his office. Just as he was about to leave with all his work done, a call came from the President’s office.

‘What is it?’

He didn’t feel so good to be called when he was about to leave. However, he still went there thinking that something must be up, and when he did, President Lee HyunJi was sitting together with a young lady.

“Sorry to bother you so late. I have someone to introduce you to. Miss HyoMin, this is Mr. KangYoon.”

President Lee HyunJi introduced KangYoon to the lady. She was a lady in her late twenties wearing casual jeans and a t-shirt. Other than her dark expression, she didn’t look that special.

“It’s our next work, Team leader Lee. We’ll be opening Miss Gye HyoMin’s piano solo recital. There was originally a group that took care of her solo recital, but things didn’t go well. And that’s why we’re here.”

“Oh, is that so?”

KangYoon asked President Lee HyunJi for the details. Pianist Gye HyoMin’s solo recital would take place at the end of March. There was a management company that was originally in charge of that, but thanks to the owner of that company going dormant after gobbling up the money, the recital was annulled. In the end, she used her own funds to request the General Music team of MG Entertainment and the work came to KangYoon.

KangYoon finally understood why the lady had such a dark expression. Even though it was a ‘concert’, a classical musician had to ask for help to a pop music company. She wouldn’t be able to do this without courage.

“We have knowhow regarding pop music, but classical music is a different field altogether. Of course, I can tell you about the audio quality and how to bring in the audience, but it will be hard for us to support you in any other way.”

KangYoon was honest here. And since he was, Gye HyoMin also spoke in a small voice.

“...I don’t care about any of that. Just allow me to do the recital.”

Her conditions were simple – to let her safely do the recital that would take place at the end of March. KangYoon asked again and again about any other conditions she may have, but she replied with a shake of her head.

President Lee HyunJi judged that this was the right time and took out the contract. Gye HyoMin signed the contract and the contract was achieved. They exchanged contracts and KangYoon extended his hand for a handshake. However, she didn’t react at

all. He had to retract his hand in awkwardness.

“...You just need to make the stage.”

“Understood.”

It seemed that the shock of the scam was still lingering on her as her gaze was filled with distrust. It wouldn't be a surprise if KangYoon felt bad, but he just looked over it.

With the contract done, Gye HyoMin went home immediately. When only two of them were left in the office, KangYoon spoke carefully.

“She doesn't seem to trust us at all.”

“It's not surprising. It looks like she was quite shocked.... She paid the contract with her own money and not the management company. She must have it really hard.”

“Hmm.... It'll be hard to work without her trust.”

“But don't you think that she's seen some hope to sign the contract? She looks desperate, and it's you we're talking about, so I'm sure you'd do well. I'll leave you to do the rest then. Tell me if you need anything.”

“Understood.”

KangYoon left the president's office after that.

“SoYoung!”

HeeYoon called out to Park SoYoung from afar. The two friends chattered a lot since it had been some time since they saw each other. They stuck together.

Park SoYoung ordered a fruit shaved ice with HeeYoon. Shaved ice in winter was great.

“When's your brother coming?”

“He'll be here soon.”

As they were talking to each other, the door opened and KangYoon entered.

“Oppa!”

HeeYoon waved her hands and Park SoYoung stood up. To Park SoYoung, KangYoon was her savior.

“SoYoung, it’s been a while. Have you been well?”

“Yes. Did you just become cooler?”

“Thanks, you became prettier too.”

They greeted each other lightly and sat down.

Park SoYoung said that she was staying in Seoul for her exam. She had applied for Hallyeo Arts university and various other music colleges in Seoul and came here for her practical exam. She was currently staying at her relative’s house.

“Do you think you’ll get in?”

“I don’t know. I did do my best....”

Park SoYoung shook her head when HeeYoon asked that. Everyone would be worried about exams, regardless of whether they’ve done well or not. KangYoon switched to a brighter topic.

“Hey. Do you girls have time this Saturday?”

“Saturday? What, are you going to show us something good?”

Park SoYoung showed strong interest. HeeYoon was the same. KangYoon gave her two tickets. HeeYoon laughed when she saw their name ‘The Formidables’.

“Oppa, the band name is ‘The Formidables’?”

“Yeah, the name might sound funny, but their songs are decent. They’re performing in Hongdae. Let’s go watch them.”

“I’m of course going. SoYoung, how about you?”

Park SoYoung didn’t say much.

“I’m also good. Oppa, may I?”

“Of course. It’s this week so just keep that in mind.”

“Yes.”

After that KangYoon paid for the shaved ice. Park SoYoung said she’d pay for it, but KangYoon said that it wasn’t good to make minors pay and took out his credit card. Then, he gave the card to HeeYoon saying he had to go back to work.

“Oppa, I’m fine.”

“Treat yourselves.”

KangYoon left HeeYoon with his card and returned to work. Seeing him leave, Park SoYoung spoke with her eyes glistening.

“HeeYoon. I.... want to have your brother.”

“Never.”

“It was a joke, but you’re strict.”

Park SoYoung looked at HeeYoon in envy since KangYoon gave his card to her.

Meanwhile, KangYoon had returned to the company and resumed his work. It was matters related to Gye HyoMin’s piano recital.

‘The most urgent thing is to get a venue.’

She wanted a recital at the end of March. KangYoon was worried. From his report, he saw that classical concert halls were already reserved from February to March. The fact that Gye HyoMin’s recital venue was taken away by someone else after it was canceled was also quite big.

‘Do we need to go away from the capital?’

KangYoon thought about that for a moment but shook his head. The number of people attending the recital would drop drastically as soon as he planned it outside the capital city. The facilities in the

concert were important, but transportation was a big factor as well.

He looked for concert venues with phone calls and other documents, but in the end, KangYoon couldn't find any suitable places. The liaison team was also busy looking for places, but they couldn't find any suitable venues either.

“Looks like I should look around town halls tomorrow.

Getting off work, KangYoon decided that he would work away from the company tomorrow. There was a limit to just talking with the bottom-of-the-hierarchy employees. He felt like there was only a possibility of meeting with the higher-up people of various art halls such as their owners.

The next day.

Bringing his company car, KangYoon started going around various art halls and other classical concert halls. He had borrowed power from President Lee HyunJi and arranged for meetings beforehand. He met with various owners of various halls, but it was hard to find a suitable place.

“I apologize, we already have a booking.”

“Understood. Please call me if it gets canceled by any chance.”

Leaving one hall, KangYoon would say the same line along with giving the opponent his business card. Presents were a must to leave a good impression. It was very tiring, and although he didn't have any ties with classical concert halls, he consoled himself by making the ties here.

It became late in the afternoon. KangYoon arrived at SeJin art center in Gangdong-gu. When he said that he had an appointment at the lobby, he was immediately guided to the center owner.

“Good evening.”

KangYoon politely greeted after entering the office. The owner

Lee RaYoung pushed her glasses up and met KangYoon. Soon, coffee arrived in luxurious cups, and they started conversing.

“Nice to meet you. I’ve heard a lot about you from President Lee HyunJi. Team leader Lee KangYoon, was it?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“A classical music concert from MG, eh? Looks like you are widening your business. Even though the pop and classical are drastically different.”

Owner Lee RaYoung gracefully drank the coffee. However, the eyes hidden behind her glasses were glaring at KangYoon. Her line implicitly asked why MG was extending their hand to classical music and not sticking to pop culture.

KangYoon saw through that and answered calmly.

“I was really worried at first. Despite that, Miss Gye HyoMin, who we are working with, was really exceptional at music. I became rather greedy as a planner.”

“Oho, really? Desire, eh?”

Even to KangYoon’s eyes, she didn’t look like someone who had a good opinion about pop music. He did hear from somewhere that some of the classical music people looked down on pop music, but it looked like she was one of them. However, KangYoon didn’t confront her directly.

“Planners always have a lot of desire. They are people who want to produce the best performance once they come in contact with good music. I’m the same. And to do that, I need your concert hall.”

“Is that so? Your pretext sounds nice.”

She received the documents from KangYoon. She was picky, but she was very delicate with her hands. KangYoon continued to talk while she flipped through the papers.

“I’ve heard that SeJin Recital Hall is a classical concert hall built 3 years ago. It can house 500 people and I’m also aware that the structure of the building is suited for classical music. The sound-dampening materials in the side ceiling nullifies any exterior noise and the suitable height of the ceiling allows for the music to travel far. I know it as the most suitable place for us.”

“Looks like you’ve done your homework.”

She smiled while looking at the documents. He had written details about the venue itself and the reason he had to borrow the venue. All of them written clearly and concisely. Honestly, she was quite tempted to accept.

However, she didn’t show any of her emotions on the outside.

“However, Mr. Lee KangYoon. We were booked by another team in March.”

“If that team was going to borrow this place for sure, I wouldn’t be here.”

“...Please continue.”

KangYoon continued to explain. He knew that this was the decisive part and postured himself properly.

“I think the reason you’re conflicted about your decision is that of the performing team’s ‘name value’. In the case of the cellist, Kim HaYoung, who made you unable to pick yet, is a very well-known youth right now. However, in my opinion, I believe that Miss Gye HyoMin is much higher in terms of being a hot issue. The comeback stage of a new star after 3 years. I think it’s also very suitable to advertise the venue. And this is also why you are conflicted.”

“Doesn’t the fact that there was no news of her for three years mean that it is very risky for me instead? In this field, one day of no practice is very noticeable, you know?”

“If that was the case, would I have come here? Just because she

wasn't publicly active for 3 years doesn't mean that she did not practice."

"....."

She became silent at KangYoon's firm resolution.

"...Looks like I'll have to think about it for a moment."

KangYoon quietly sipped his coffee saying it was alright. The coffee had cooled down while he was passionately speaking, and it cooled his throat as well.

Lee RaYoung was also very conflicted. KangYoon's words were definitely correct. As the owner of the venue, she had to talk about which side was more profitable. After thinking for a while, she organized her thoughts and spoke of the outcome.

"...Very well. Let's sign the contract."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"I think that Miss Gye HyoMin's recital will be more desperate. After all, she is making a comeback after three years and this is the first time for you, Mr. Lee KangYoon, to do something in this field. I will trust in that eagerness. It might be difficult since it's your first time in this field, but do go ahead."

She was very arrogant. However, KangYoon could notice how much calculations she did in her head about profits. It was a victory from meticulous preparation.

She stood up and extended her right hand and KangYoon grabbed her hand.

Like that, KangYoon got a contract from SeJin Recital Hall.

Min JinSeo came to the company and met with Chairman Won JinMoon. It was to talk about the movie she would be starring in soon. Having read the scenario in the Chairman's office, she shook her head.

“I think the plot is too difficult. The main character place is very tempting, but still....”

“Are you going to reject?”

“Yes, I apologize. Even though you went through that trouble.”

“Not at all. The actress can’t do it, so what can they do about it?”

Chairman Won JinMoon immediately accepted her opinion. Being the main character of a movie was a big thing. This would be her first time as the main character as well, but seeing her reject it, he judged that her opinions could be trusted.

“There will be another scenario tomorrow. Let’s have a look at it then.”

“Yes.”

Having finished the meeting, Min JinSeo left the Chairman’s office.

‘Should I visit?’

She pondered for a moment before heading to KangYoon’s office. When she entered, she could see KangYoon sweating in front of the computer.

“Sir.”

“JinSeo?”

KangYoon stood up from his seat to greet her. He immediately pressed some coffee from a machine in his office and gave it to Min JinSeo.

“Thank you.”

The coffee she drank in KangYoon’s office was always nice. No, even if it was the same coffee, her feelings were different. KangYoon sat opposite to her and handed her a ticket.

“Sir, what’s this?”

“A ticket. JinSeo, you don’t have any schedule today, do you?”

“Yes. What is it?”

KangYoon said that it was the ticket to a performance by the band formed by Lee HyunAh, who took bronze in the College Pop Festival, and her expression became strange.

“If it’s alright with you, do you want to come with me? You let me ride the van last time too... It’s somewhat awkward to call it paying back, but.... These guys are decent, so it should be nice to watch.”

“Really? Today, I.... do have time. Let’s go.”

“You do need to disguise yourself though.”

KangYoon scheduled her to meet in the lobby after work. Min JinSeo left the office saying yes.

And as soon as she closed the door...

‘Yes!’

She cheered due to the unexpected gain.

Chapter 71. His First Song is a Hurricane?

(3)

KangYoon headed to the café in Hongdae where he promised to meet up with HeeYoon and Park SoYoung. He was taking Min JinSeo with him as well. Of course, she was disguised beforehand so that no one could recognize her.

When they entered the café, HeeYoon was already waiting for them.

“Oppa, over here.”

HeeYoon waved her hand to greet KangYoon, but her expression turned strange when she saw Min JinSeo following KangYoon in. KangYoon didn’t seem to notice that and waved back at her.

“Oppa, you’re here.”

“Did you wait for long?”

“Not really. Who’s that behind you?”

HeeYoon was on guard against the woman KangYoon had brought. Her brother’s girl? She felt rather strange. KangYoon seemed to realize that and introduced the girl.

“HeeYoon, say hello. This is Min JinSeo, who would be going with us today. JinSeo, this is my sister HeeYoon. And she’s her friend, Park SoYoung.”

“Your sister, sir? Oh, hello. My name is Min JinSeo.”

When Min JinSeo took off her sunglasses and scarf, HeeYoon and Park SoYoung were flabbergasted. The idol of all teens, the wannabe, role model – the girl with such titles to her name had appeared before them.

“Mi... Min Jin....”

Meanwhile, Min JinSeo approached her kindlier when she heard

that she was KangYoon's sister. She even expressed her friendliness by grabbing HeeYoon's hands, and that made HeeYoon shake. KangYoon only shrugged his shoulders.

After greeting each other, the four headed to the concert venue. The concert venue wasn't that far away from the café. Min JinSeo seemed surprised to find out that KangYoon had a sister and tried to get closer to HeeYoon. HeeYoon also gradually opened her heart to her as well. With Park SoYoung joining the fray, the three soon started bantering loudly

“It's here.”

Having arrived at the entrance to the concert venue, KangYoon handed in the ticket and lead everyone inside.

“Wow....”

The girls were surprised to see no seats in the audience. They were kind of curious to see a small yet dynamic stage they had only seen through TVs.

“HeeYoon. Do tell me if you feel ill.”

“Okay.”

KangYoon warned HeeYoon to tell him the slightest mishaps. He was slightly worried due to the loud music and the unventilated venue. However, he also thought that it should be fine since she was gradually getting better.

KangYoon and the others could grab their places at the front. They were relatively early. The stage was set with instruments and there was some smoke from the fog machine along with purple lights. The smoke specific to fog machines provoked KangYoon's nose. He also smelled some stuffy smell unique to underground stages.

With the concert approaching, people started entering. The audience was mostly couples and college students of both genders. People started entering and the empty concert venue started being

filled with chatters.

When they were getting loud, darkness pervaded the concert venue. Then, the spotlight shone on the center of the stage. There was one woman standing there. It was Lee HyunAh.

“Hello~!”

“Waaaaaaa—-!”

The people started cheering along with her appearance. When HeeYoon looked around in surprise, all the others were looking at the front with wide eyes.

“Welcome to our, ‘The Formidables’, concert. Let’s have a blast today! Are you ready!!”

“Yeaaaaaaah~!”

“Are you ready~!!”

“Yeaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Lee HyunAh’s concert began with a loud shout that filled the venue.

♪♪-♪-♪♪-♪

The sound of a piano rang out in the house. Gye HyoMin closed her eyes and felt the weight of the notes on the piano. She played softly where it needed to be and strong where it required strength to play the melody. The music flowed like flowing water as her playing continued.

Her body was dripping with sweat. She usually practiced continuously once she sat down. Nothing came into her vision when she was practicing.

However.

The practice ended abruptly due to a disharmony. The sound she wanted didn’t come out in the part where the tempo slowly rose.

“Just where did it go wrong!”

Indeed, just where did it go wrong.

Shouted Gye HyoMin. Her head could play it, but her hands couldn't keep up.

“Aah.....”

A chaotic mind resulted in chaotic playing.

Again and again, she tried, but she kept stumbling.

Even after repeating several times, she was stuck in the same bit.

Chopin Barcarolle.

It was a tricky song that even world-famous pianists found it tricky. It was a rather infamous song that not many people picked, saying it got harder the more you played it. However, there were many people who wanted to listen to it, and she herself had the desire to do this, and she chose this song.

“Aaah.....!”

However, her hands didn't follow her heart.

Park SoYoung had already become one with the rest of the audience and was jumping excitedly. Min JinSeo was the same. She even put her arms around someone else's shoulders and enjoyed the music. HeeYoon couldn't jump but she still clapped and enjoyed the stage in her own way.

Although everyone's way of enjoying was different, everyone was indeed cheering for Lee HyunAh's stage.

‘Cool.’

KangYoon was honestly surprised. Lee HyunAh was shining on the stage. The white light from the band ‘The Formidables’ also stimulated KangYoon's eyes. KangYoon had also become an audience that cheered.

Like that, a round of exciting music went past and then came a slight rest. Lee HyunAh panted slightly and spoke to the audience.

“The one I’m going to sing this time is our main song.”

“Waaaaaa—.”

The audience cheered. Until now she had only sung remakes of famous songs. It was now the main, so everyone’s focus gathered again.

“It’s a song called ‘Do you have some time?’, and... I’ll continue after I let you listen to it.”

She sent a signal to the drums as if there was no need to speak anymore. The drummer soon ticked four times with the stick. The bass slid and the other instruments entered as well.

“Perhaps I might be busy today – and tomorrow’s no good either – “

When her song started ringing across the stage rhythmically, the audience entered the beat as well with their claps. The rhythmical yet not so fast song made them shake their shoulders.

“At that time – come closer—to me – whoo~.”

The clean tone from the guitar snapped into the beat. The bass also snapped occasionally to follow the guitar. With the voice in the mix, the audience cheered even more.

It was a rather revitalizing song for the audience who became tired after jumping around all this time. However, the melody to the ears was also very addictive. The audience started following the song with the lyrics they had just heard.

“Whoo—let us meet again—“

“Let us meet again. |

Lee HyunAh was overcome with emotions when she heard the audience following her. The number of audience members didn’t matter. What mattered was that they cheered on for her. It felt

different but still good to the performances she did before that.

She put all her emotions to it and the song came to the climax. Her voice climbed, and the audience's cheers climbed as well. Everyone was one.

With that, a song came to an end. Along with a loud applause, cheers filled the venue.

“Thank you.”

Lee HyunAh calmed down the audience that still clapped towards her and grabbed the mic again. When she signaled that she was about to speak, everyone calmed down.

“Was this song okay?”

“Yes!”

“Thank you.”

“Whaaaaaaa— “

Cheers and applause erupted again. She felt overwhelmed with emotions with her first song being acknowledged. However, she calmed herself down again and continued.

“Was the song just now okay?”

“YEESS!”

Everyone said at the same time. She seemed satisfied with the answer and she clapped once and the audience all waved their hands.

‘Good manners.’

Seeing Lee HyunAh on stage, KangYoon could see qualities of a star in her. Not to mention Min JinSeo, HeeYoon and Park SoYoung were completely into the performance right now. The Lee HyunAh on stage was shining. Even though this shouldn't be something she learned before, she was that talented. With that much, KangYoon could judge that she could definitely succeed.

Lee HyunAh calmed down and spoke on.

“The song just now actually has a little story behind it. You know? I’m actually quite shy.”

“Hahaha!”

Her actions were contrasting to her words, so everyone ended up laughing. Even the band members behind her started giggling. Lee HyunAh pouted slightly. Then, the laughing became even louder.

“I really am though....”

“Lol.”

“Anyway, this is a song I made together with someone who opened a path to the shy me. He was the first one to tell me that my song has potential and has acknowledged my way. He’s here today too. Over there.”

She pointed towards the third row where KangYoon was standing. When everyone’s gazes focused on him, KangYoon looked around before pointing to himself.

“He gave me this song and made me what I am today. Please give him a round of applause.”

“Ooooooooooh—“

Along with her words, people started clapping towards KangYoon. KangYoon was surprised, but he still eventually greeted the people.

However....

‘He... made her a song?’

Min JinSeo’s expression beneath her thick glasses became extremely dark.

.
. .

The performance ended and KangYoon had a short meeting with Lee HyunAh. Since she now had fans, he couldn't stay with her for long. Even so, he greeted her and gave her some flowers before exiting the stage. (T/N: Is this common in the west? Giving flowers to someone is usually to congratulate people.)

“That was perfect!”

“She was awesome!”

HeeYoon and Park SoYoung still seemed to have lingering emotions about the stage. Talking about how they got to take selfies with Lee HyunAh, they were really like every other girl of their age.

“.....”

However, Min JinSeo didn't speak at all. KangYoon asked her in confusion.

“JinSeo, was today's performance no good?”

“It was. It was very interesting.”

Though, her expression told the complete opposite. KangYoon felt sorry when he was the one to call her out for this one.

“Was there something that you didn't like?”

“Not at all.”

“Then what is it? You don't look well.”

“.....”

KangYoon kept asking since she looked completely different to her usual self, but she kept quiet. KangYoon left the other two to walk up front and walked next to Min JinSeo. Since he was the one to invite her, he felt some kind of responsibility.

“...Can I ask you one thing?”

“Go on.”

“...Is it true that you made a song for Miss HyunAh like she

said?”

KangYoon flinched. He could feel the intense heat in her eyes behind those fake glasses. Since he had never seen such a side of her, KangYoon was shocked. Though, he still spoke without panicking.

“Rather than making her a song.... You know how I receive music lessons nowadays, right?”

“Yes, I heard last time.”

“HyunAh is someone I got to know at that time. And one day, she brought me a song she composed. With her and the professor in charge’s help, I made a tiny melody line. Making a song? I’m still not that skilled yet.”

“.....”

Min JinSeo stopped her steps and faced KangYoon. KangYoon didn’t know why he had to talk about this, but he still spoke to console her. She stared at KangYoon for a little before walking again.

“So, you didn’t make her a song, but gave her help.”

“To be exact, yeah.”

“What the heck, I....”

Min JinSeo’s expression finally brightened. KangYoon couldn’t understand why Min JinSeo was like this. No, he remembered something.

“JinSeo, is it because that I told you that I’ll give you my first song?”

“I’m okay with that now.”

“.....”

KangYoon felt embarrassed now. He coughed awkwardly and walked while looking at the ground when she spoke again.

“I’ll just buy every single one of your songs.”

“.....”

KangYoon grabbed his head in agony thinking about what to do with this girl.

After ‘The Formidables’ first stage, the digital single ‘Do you have some time’ went up on a music website.

“Hey hey, we got a comment.”

Kim JinDae became excited after looking at a comment on the website. It was the first comment after 12 hours.

-The song is so good. I’ll look forward to more in the future. Wow!

Although there weren’t many recommendations, that single comment made him overjoyed.

“JinDae-oppa is getting excited again.”

“Leave him be. Today’s an exception.”

Lee ChaHee, the bass player, and Jung ChanGyu, the electric guitar player shook their heads. However, they were actually very happy as well.

While the instruments were getting set up, Lee HyunAh was texting.

- The setting is so hard. ToT Oppa~~ What are you doing right now~?

- Work

She sent a text message full of her heart, but the reply was extremely simple. She couldn’t send anymore when he was at work, so she suddenly became very dejected.

“HyunAh! We’re done!”

Lee ChaHee shouted since speaking in a small voice didn't seem to work.

“Sorry about that.”

“Your boyfriend?”

“I wish.”

“Whew, then a good mood between the two of you?”

Lee HyunAh dejectedly shook her head at her question. Lee ChaHee patted her back.

“There there! Let's start now!”

However, Lee HyunAh recovered in time for practice and they started practicing passionately again.

“...We are done with liaising the venue. The schedule is 27th and 28th of March at Sejin Recital Hall.”

“That's good.”

KangYoon explained to Gye HyoMin the current status. Originally, this was something that's supposed to be told to her manager or the president of where she belongs, but Gye HyoMin was currently without a management company.

She seemed satisfied by his work and put down the papers he gave her.

“Both the venue and the dates are fine. So, all I must do is to focus on the performance now?”

“Yes, unless a natural disaster suddenly collapses the venue, you only need to prepare yourself for that day.”

“Fu, as expected. MG Entertainment isn't a big company for nothing.”

There was no reason for such a large company to scam her. Moreover, the documents KangYoon gave her had the stamp from

the owner of Sejin Recital Hall. She now no longer needed to be worried about scams or anything else. She sighed in relief.

“Phew....”

“How is your condition?”

“Not bad.”

“You do not have a management company, are you fine with that?”

“I’ll have to try.”

This was what KangYoon was worried about. The difference between having a management company to take care of everything else other than her performance versus not having one at all was actually very big. This decided her mindset while practicing after all.

“Hmm.... May I observe for the time being then? I need to see how prepared you are for the performance.”

“Okay then.”

“Then I’ll come back in three days.”

KangYoon set the schedule and disbanded.

Three days later.

KangYoon arrived in front of a house with a simplified map. Gye HyoMin’s residence was a house that looked quite spooky. When he was lead inside by the janitor, he could hear beautiful piano sounds.

‘Sounds nice.’

KangYoon became absent-minded by the beautiful piano sound for a moment. The rapidly changing tempo charmed him.

“It’s here.”

Lead by the janitor, he carefully stepped inside.

“Gosh, why!”

However, what he saw as soon as he entered was Gye HyoMin halting her playing and smashing on the keys of the piano.

Chapter 72. 3 Years Already (1)

“Ah, you’re here?”

Gye HyoMin stood up from her piano as soon as she saw KangYoon.

“Hello.”

“Fu.... Looks like I showed you something unsightly.”

Perhaps due to screwing up her playing, KangYoon didn’t feel like this wasn’t the first time she did this. Her expression was filled with fatigue.

Gye HyoMin told the janitor to bring some tea. Soon, light snacks and tea were prepared.

“The other songs are fine but it’s just this one song that I screw up.”

“Is this the barcarole?”

“Yes. It’s the one by Chopin. This isn’t such a fast song but it’s quite a tricky piece to play. It’s a piece I’m challenging for the first time... but it sure isn’t easy.”

She sipped her tea and shook her head. In KangYoon’s view, she looked much more fatigued than the meeting they had 3 days ago.

‘I did hear that classical musicians practiced day and night....’

She probably practiced all day and all night in order to perfect that piece. However, the sudden change in tempo was definitely not easy. It didn’t work out after all that practice? KangYoon was flabbergasted at the difficulty of classical music.

“If we went without it or something....”

“That must absolutely not happen.”

Before KangYoon could even finish his words, Gye HyoMin denied his proposal. KangYoon had to take a step back.

“Understood.”

“It won’t happen. Please refrain from speaking that way.”

This seemed to be a sensitive topic as she was momentarily on edge. KangYoon thought for a moment.

‘Is this really fine? Look like I’ll have to prepare two different scenarios.’

Although there were times where being stubborn led to good results, more often than not it leads to worse situations. KangYoon decided to prepare for both scenarios.

After the tea time, KangYoon requested to observe her practice. She accepted it without much hassle. She did joke about how he was about to become her manager, but KangYoon also lightly accepted it by saying that he once worked as a manager. Thanks to that, the heavy atmosphere was lifted somewhat.

Gye HyoMin sat in front of the piano again and started practicing. Her hand movements were beautiful. Musical notes flowed out endlessly and created light. The suitable softness variation and tempo changes were praiseworthy in anyone’s eyes.

However, she slipped up in a part where it descended and ascended again, and eventually, she stopped her practice.

“Ah.....”

She made the same mistake, and she lowered her head.

“It’s definitely not an easy piece.”

“I will be fine after practice.”

“Yes, of course.”

However, KangYoon started off by consoling her as if nothing had happened. He tried his best to not show a change in emotions on the surface.

Gye HyoMin turned around to the piano again and started

playing. However, she slipped up in the same part and stopped playing at the same part.

“Again....”

She tried again, but it was the same again. She tried again and again like some madman, but she repeated the same mistake as though she was an animal getting trapped by the same trap repeatedly. There was no need to mention the musical note and the light.

KangYoon observed wordlessly for one hour before eventually grabbing her hand.(E/N: I feel bad for her, as a pianist myself)

“Please rest a moment.”

“Not yet, Not yet!”

“Look in the mirror.”

“Ah....”

She could finally see herself drenched in sweat through the mirror, the dark bags under her eyes also told her that her body was physically tired.

‘This is dangerous....’

KangYoon sternly watched as Gye HyoMin said she was going to wash her face. He didn’t feel like he should leave her be. At this rate, it was obvious that there would be problems with her performance on the actual day.

When she came back, KangYoon started speaking again.

“It looks like we need someone to manage you.”

“...I don’t have the time to look for one.”

“For the meantime, I’ll fill in that job, Miss HyoMin. Like I said before, I started off as a manager. You don’t need to worry.”

“.....”

“Consider it a service. This is for the recital after all.”

The janitor was also a man, so the problem of ‘a man and a woman under one roof’ didn’t really matter. He couldn’t let it be after seeing her fatigued expression and the grey light from her practice.

“.....”

Gye HyoMin was silent. She was also desperately feeling the need for management. After thinking about it for a while, she accepted KangYoon’s offer.

After that, KangYoon sat down near the piano. He checked her practice on top of going over the documents he had brought. Gye HyoMin got stuck on the same part every single time. She kept practicing in order to overcome that, but once she got upset or overboard, KangYoon always stopped her.

KangYoon also had a hard time enduring grey light, but he endured through the day.

“Don’t practice anymore today.”

After the practice was over, KangYoon told her again and again as he stepped out the front door. He was worried that she may sit in front of the piano again.

“I get it already.”

“I’ll ask the janitor later.”

“Ah, sheesh. You’re so picky.”

“You’ll keep practicing if I don’t go this far.”

“.....”

Bullseye. Gye HyoMin acted nonchalantly since she was found out. KangYoon gave her the final blow.

“You won’t get better just by recklessly practicing. Rather than practicing repeatedly, I think it will be better for you to rest and think about why you slip up.”(E/N: So true, any aspiring pianist’s take this line to heart)

“...Fine. So, I just need to rest for today?”

“Yes. Then I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“.....”

The nitpicker repeated the same lines repeatedly before leaving. When KangYoon left, the janitor asked her.

“Miss, should I turn on the light in the practice room?”

“It’s fine. I’m going to sleep today.”

Perhaps thanks to KangYoon’s words, Gye HyoMin headed to her bedroom.

Recently, a group of hot topic idols appeared from Yoonseul entertainment.

DiaTeen – Teen girls that shone like diamonds.

This group of five girls was compared with Eddios and became a hot topic. DiaTeen’s theme was cute dances and relatively easier songs while Eddios went with a relatively more difficult skill set.

“President Choo ManJi used his head.”

Looking at the internet article, Director Lee HanSeo shook his head. That article compared the leader of Eddios, Jung MinAh, and the leader of DiaTeen, Kang SeGyung, saying that the two possessed different charm points. It also ended with the line that it was the fight between senior and junior.

“PR team, did you request the newspaper agencies to stop putting DiaTeen and Eddios into one article?”

“Yes. However, they aren’t easily accepting it since their views go up if they compare the two together.”

“That’s a pain. Keep asking them anyway. Don’t let them ever go to cable TV. Also, don’t ever let our girls appear in the same program as DiaTeen.”

“Yes.”

Director Lee HanSeo gave the strict order to the various teams. He couldn't possibly let DiaTeen use Eddios's popularity to rise. He even told Chairman Won JinMoon for this. However, it was unknown if that President Choo ManJi would listen.

“I miss a cup of tea....”

Director Lee HanSeo sighed deeply at the rival's strategy.

KangYoon was at Gye HyoMin's house to watch her practice for the past few days now, but her practice had no progress. However, it did seem effective as she no longer flipped out in anger or pushed herself until she sweated cold sweat.

‘Ugh....’

It's been several days now. KangYoon was also having a hard time enduring the effects of grey light. He was even considering working himself through various piano-related books and videos in an attempt to help her.

“Ah.... Just why doesn't it work?”

Gye HyoMin, after an hour of practice, told KangYoon. She seemed attached to him now and was now able to exchange light words as well.

“This is hard. You're getting stuck in the same spot every time....”

She had repeated the same part for several days, but there was no progress.

KangYoon had thought up of many methods over the past few days. Today was the day they were going to monitor her. He even brought three high-quality cameras from his company.

“You've even brought cameras today?”

“The musicians actually can’t objectively listen to their playing while they are playing. We’ll observe the sound and your posture since we’re doing it.”

“It’s slightly embarrassing....”

Gye HyoMin had never monitored herself other than at recitals so she felt slightly awkward with KangYoon’s approach. However, this wasn’t time to rule out anything, so she accepted his proposal.

The light went on the camera and her practice began again. Gye HyoMin postured herself properly once again and started playing. Musical notes started playing in front of KangYoon’s eyes as well. Of course, the grey light did not change.

“Ah....”

However, her hands always slipped up in the part she always did. It was the part just after 4 minutes where the song heightened before becoming calm again. Just as she lowered her head and shook her head, KangYoon spoke.

“Try again.”

“Sorry?”

“It’s fine if you get it wrong so continue until the end. Like how grade schoolers practice.”

At his words, she slowly tapped on each note one by one. Of course, the tempo was all over the place. However, she didn’t get the notes wrong. It was slightly funny to do it slowly, but she could go past it.

Like that, she went past the difficult part and came back to the fast tempo part. This part was something she was confident in. Her hands started dancing on the piano again. KangYoon shot her through the camera without missing anything. The sound became louder and she stepped on the pedal to expand the sound. Her entire body danced along with the rhythm.

The song eventually reached its climax. After her faulty 4-minute mark, there were no problems until the end. No, in fact, the grey light eventually turned white. However, the remnant effects of the grey light couldn't be satiated with the white light.

Her fingers danced on the notes and the sound eventually died down. Then, the sound became louder and the barcarole came to an end.

“Well done.”

KangYoon applauded.

“It was awful. Not something worthy of applause.”

“Shall we go through the monitoring then?”

KangYoon headed to the living room along with Gye HyoMin. Then, he connected the camera to the wall-mounted TV and played the footage. Then, her piano practice played.

“Ah, that part there. The hands.”

She watched her footage closely. She especially focused on her hands. However, she seemed to have found something strange as her expression twisted slightly.

“Why do the hands keep dropping down?”

Just as it went over the 2-minute mark and into 3 minutes, her wrists dropped downwards in the part where the piece became quieter.

“Aren't the hands supposed to be parallel to the keys?”

“Yes, they are. That's strange. Why do my hands keep dropping down?”

She clapped her hands as though she had finally realized something. With her wrists lowered, the supposedly arched fingers also lost their strength. She always thought that she was putting her mind to it, but it turned out she had the most fundamental problem. However, she played the footage again and again in order

to engrave it in her mind.

After the two replayed the footage ten times, the two finally turned off the video.

“Let’s do it again.”

Along with KangYoon’s words, she sat down in front of the piano and took a deep breath. This time, she resolved herself to put her mind into her hand postures and started practicing again.

‘Oho?’

KangYoon was surprised after the start of the practice. A constant stream of notes started making white light. Unlike before where it slowly turned grey, it didn’t happen this time. It looks like her posture was indeed the problem.

‘Classical music sure is delicate.’

He didn’t know that a change in posture would change the sound as well. Unfortunately, it was quite hard to distinguish with his ears. However, with the light, he could realize at a glance. He felt very good not seeing the murky grey color anymore. However, the real obstacle had yet to come.

The problematic 4-minute mark. Her hand movements started getting faster. This was the part where the mood became higher before calming down again.

‘Hand, hand!’

Gye HyoMin put her mind into her hands. There was no need to look at the score since she had memorized them all. She made her hands into an arch as though it was the first time she had learned piano and focused her mind on constantly lifting her wrists.

♪♪♪♪-♪♪-♪♪——...

‘It worked!’

KangYoon inwardly shouted out after seeing Gye HyoMin smoothly going past the problematic part. Her hands naturally slid

down the keys like a lie. It was a fantastical movement. Even she herself was filled with unexpected joy.

“Let’s keep going until the end.”

Gye HyoMin didn’t stop her practice after hearing KangYoon’s words. Completing the piece until the end came first. After she overcame her problems, there were no obstacles for her at all. She freely danced on top of the keys and perfectly digested the 8-minute long piece.

“Yeah~!”

As soon as she finished her practice, she stood up and ran towards KangYoon. She put her hand up and hi-fived KangYoon. Pianists rarely did something that would give their hands a shock, but they sometimes did that to their closest friends. She was that happy right now.

“I did it. I actually did it!”

“Congratulations!”

KangYoon felt emotional as well. three days. It was three long days. He also felt like he had just climbed over a large mountain.

“Thank you for everything. I’m confident now.”

“That’s good. Phew. Looks like I can rest easy.”

“Now leave it all to me!”

Unlike before, Gye HyoMin was filled with confidence. And just as she said, the remainder of her practice was filled with leisure and power.

‘Good. This should be fine.’

Observing her practice, KangYoon finally felt like this performance was going to be a success.

In a practice room filled with rhythmical music, men with

muscles all over their bodies were dancing intensely. A one-handed handstand was basic, their legs being flung all over the place was a piece of art itself.

As a finish, they completed the dance with several 'swipes', where they spun around a few times with their hands on the ground.

"Fuah! Good work!"

In the middle, a man with long hair tied behind his back just congratulated his teammates that he just practiced with. Everyone was steaming due to the intense practice. After a serious round of practice, everyone had a round of rest.

At that time, the vice-leader of the team, Kim DoMin, entered.

"Hyung."

"DoMin, you're here."

"Hello?"

The man with the tied hair delightfully greeted Kim DoMin who turned up late for practice. This was the guy who replaced him going around busily for the soon-to-be concert. He was having a hard time in this pre-spring cold weather.

"How did it turn out?"

"I looked around everywhere, but MG was the best."

"MG? Isn't that where Eddios belongs? Wasn't that place an idol company?"

The tied-hair man shook his head in confusion. However, Kim DoMin continued speaking saying that it was nothing like that at all.

"I heard that MG Concert team is so famous nowadays. Apparently, their team leader is someone really good."

"Isn't it expensive?"

“I think we’ll have to spend all the money from our prize.”

“Hey.”

The man with his hair tied up drew the line saying that that was no good.

“Are you insane? We worked so hard to get that prize and you’re going to spend it all? Are you trying to starve us here?”

“It’s impossible with that money if we go anywhere else. If we go anywhere else, we’d have to look for the venue, machines and other props all by ourselves. But MG told me that they’ll do everything for us.”

“So we’re going to use all that money?”

The tied-hair man kept complaining. However, Kim DoMin said that this was the way to go to save money.

‘Hey, there they go again.’

‘They’re so frugal.... They always get into a fight over money.’

The team members were about to get some popcorn.

“So, did you sign the contract?”

“No, I said that I’ll talk it over with you.”

“That’s good. And hey, is that on the cheaper side?”

“Considering how our prize money can get a concert at all, it’s very cheap. Instead....”

“Instead?”

“They said they’ll take a portion of the profits.”

Along with those words, the two fought for over an hour.

But the result was that they would go to MG.

‘Sheesh, they should have arrived here earlier....’

The team members shook their heads in resignation after seeing the two fight for over an hour.

Chapter 73. 3 Years Already (2)

Friday, 27th March.

Sejin Art Center.

People dressed in formal clothing were walking up the stairs. They handed their tickets to the staff and walked to their designated seats.

“A solo piano recital from Gye HyoMin. How long has this been, professor?”

“I guess it’s been 3 years? It’s nice to see her like this. Haha.”

That was the conversation between a middle-aged man and a middle-aged woman. Not only them, there were many others who were expecting a lot from Gye HyoMin’s piano recital. This was a solo piano recital after 3 years without news from her.

Everyone was filled with expectation as they sat down on their designated seats.

– Attention, please. In a moment, the Solo Recital by the Pianist Gye HyoMin will commence. Audiences should....

The relatively noisy audience became quiet when the announcement began. The audience seats were full. When the venue became quiet, the lights darkened and the curtains on the stage rose. The spotlight turned on and Gye HyoMin slowly walked out from the side of the stage.

The audience all met Gye HyoMin with loud applause. She, wearing an ample dress, shined more under the light. The applause filling the venue showed the expectation they had for her.

Sitting on the piano, Gye HyoMin lightly stretched her fingers and started her first song, ‘Chopin’s Sonata 2’. The audience closed their eyes to tune into the melody. The crisp playing of the melody tickled all of their ears.

‘Beautiful.’

Behind the stage, KangYoon was admiring the light from the notes. The grey light that had nagged him throughout the practice was nowhere to be seen. The usage of the pedal at the right times made the notes ring out more, and the nimble hand movements created a marvelous melody. The reaction from the audience became stronger as the light became more intense as well.

One, two, three pieces.

As the pieces progressed, the applaud from the audiences became louder. The light that shone in KangYoon’s eyes also became brighter.

‘Good.’

There was nothing wrong with the piano, and there weren’t any problematic occurrences either. As the recital progressed, the everyone was drenched in her piano.

Like that, the first section ended. Gye HyoMin exited the stage amidst a loud applause. KangYoon quietly headed to the waiting room behind the stage.

“Well done. How are you doing?”

She smiled at KangYoon’s question as though there was no problem.

“Perfect. I’m in my top condition.”

“There won’t be any problems at this rate. Let’s keep it like this until the end.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon left the waiting room after that. He was worried that his presence may disrupt her focus and held back on his words. With delicate people, watching silently from the back worked better than words of encouragement.

The interval finished and the 2nd section started.

The 2nd section started with ‘La Campanella’ and drowned the audience quicker than the 1st section did. Gye HyoMin played very passionately with her whole body and that affected the audience as well. Everyone fell deep into the piano.

And eventually, the final song was left.

Chopin’s Barcarole – the piece that left Gye HyoMin in despair several times.

‘Phew.’

She took a deep breath. She even fixed her posture again and resolved inwardly to do better. She stretched her hand once more as well. People held their breaths after seeing her act that way. The venue was filled with the sound of breaths.

KangYoon also changed his position from the back of the stage to the front. This was the most important piece. He stood in a place where he could see Gye HyoMin easily just in case something happened.

Gye HyoMin put her hands on the piano as she exhaled.

‘Hands, hands.’

Gye HyoMin stretched her hands multiple times. She kept reminding herself of the footage that she went through with KangYoon. The most important thing was the posture! – she kept suggesting herself with that.



After two more deep breaths, she started playing.

‘It’s begun.’

KangYoon also watched her nervously. It started off alright. Bright white light seeped into the people in the audience. Watching the audience immerse themselves in the music, KangYoon became more nervous; he was immersed in nervousness.

1 minute, 2 minutes, 3 minutes.

It was alright until now. The audience were following closely as well. The problem began now. Gye HyoMin's playing approached the problem zone.

‘No!’

However, at that time, KangYoon discovered that her palms were heading lower than the keys. At this rate, she would not be able to play the upcoming part. He looked around once and ran up towards the stage while being careful not to make any noise. He also ducked down so that he wouldn't easily be discovered by the audience. At a place where she could see him as well, he pointed towards his own right hand.

‘Why...?’

Gye HyoMin was surprised to see KangYoon doing such a strange action. She was supposed to be focusing right now, and it even annoyed her as well. However, his hands were doing something. He kept pointing towards his hand.

‘Oh!’

She finally noticed that her hands were in a strange position. Although she kept focusing until now, she had still made that mistake. However, it wasn't too late. She immediately fixed her hand posture into an arc. As soon as she did, the problem zone came.

♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ - ♪ ♪ ♪ - ♪ ♪ - ♪ ♪ - ♪ —

As though sliding, she instantly passed the problem zone. She instantly went from the high parts of the piano to the low parts as though sliding.

“Wow....”

The audience exclaimed after hearing Gye HyoMin's beautiful techniques and endless changes in tempo. They felt as though they

could let go of their souls due to the beautiful melody. Slow, fast, then slow again – the piano sound softened until it disappeared. However, it suddenly became loud again and peaked.

“Wow.”

The loud piano melody slid up the notes from low to high this time. It was a new part of the piece. There was a grandeur befitting of the last piece. Everyone almost started clapping subconsciously.

‘Good!’

Gye HyoMin’s playing produced an intense white light. The audience was captivated by the light as it seeped into them. KangYoon returned to the side of the stage and heaved a sigh of relief.

As the piano sounds softened, a thunderous applause erupted out. Everyone was praising Gye HyoMin endlessly for her return in 3 years.

The recital marched towards the end just like that.

After successfully clearing his business with Gye HyoMin’s solo recital, he immediately reported to Chairman Won JinMoon.

“Thanks for your work. Working with people doing classical music should have been quite a task... you have worked hard.”

“Not at all, sir.”

Chairman Won JinMoon patted KangYoon’s shoulders and encouraged him. Naturally, he didn’t forget to talk about a bonus. KangYoon was all smiling since the bonus pay he received since entering the company amounted to even more than his monthly salary combined until now. That was the price of success upon success.

After his visit to the office, KangYoon headed to the president’s office for the next work. In the president’s office, President Lee

HyunJi was talking with two men related to his next work.

“Hello, I am Lee KangYoon.”

KangYoon briefly introduced himself. President Lee HyunJi seemed to have introduced him beforehand as he didn't need to mention a lot. The man with tied hair introduced himself as the leader Bang SanHyuk, and the relatively shorter man with shaved hair introduced himself as the vice-leader Kim DoMin.

After a brief introduction, Bang SanHyuk brought up this topic first.

“Our conditions are simple – A breakdancing stage with around 200 people.”

“200 people?”

“Yes. You can take care of the rest.”

Bang Sanhyuk's condition wasn't that hard to fulfill. KangYoon asked on while he wrote stuff in a memo.

“A small venue with 200 people as the audience... do you mean about the size of the theater in Daehak-ro?”

“I want it to be slightly bigger than that.”

“Okay then. An audience of 200 and the price of the tickets doesn't matter....”

“Wait, I didn't think about the ticket prices...”

Just as KangYoon and Kim DoMin were conversing, Bang Sanhyuk interfered.

“Are you selling tickets?”

“Yes. Is there a problem?”

“Wait wait. I didn't know about this.”

“We do not stage a performance without profit. Otherwise, I think you've come to the wrong person.”

KangYoon was firm in this. President Lee HyunJi was rather surprised about this, but KangYoon didn't care.

“Hey, stand up.”

As Battlemonsters went anywhere as long as people wanted it until now, KangYoon's words caused a sense of rejection to him. Bang SanHyuk made Kim DoMin stand saying that they had no more business here. However, Kim DoMin seemed to think differently.

“Wait. How long are we going to do free concerts?”

“So you want to earn money using the fans who cheered and supported us until now?”

“Hey, just listen to me once....”

“Forget it. We aren't doing this. It looks like we came to the wrong place. Please excuse us.”

Bang SanHyuk stood up from his seat. Kim DoMin also followed him out restlessly.

“Oh, the contract is gone.”

President Lee HyunJi stretched her arms as she shook her head. She thought that there would be something to make out of this breakdancing, and was slightly disappointed at the turn of events. However, KangYoon was smiling instead.

“They'll come back.”

“What do you mean?”

“Look at that.”

KangYoon pointed towards where Kim DoMin sat, and there was a bag there. President Lee HyunJi burst out giggling.

“You mean he left it there on purpose?”

“The one called Kim DoMin will persuade Bang SanHyuk.”

“How are you so sure?”

“I looked into them a little before I came here. Their team, Battlemonsters, is skilled enough to take 1st place even in international competitions. They are legends in that field. However, they can’t live on with just prize money, right? The one called Bang SanHyuk just now doesn’t seem to be realistic in that sense. From what I know, the expenses of the team are practically managed by the vice-leader. Instead, Bang SanHyuk is skilled in unifying the team.

“But from what he said just now, he seems to think that the relationship with the fans is more important than a stage that can profit them.”

“Even though he said that he must be thinking differently. Otherwise, they shouldn’t have come here.”

“That’s true. They wouldn’t have staked all their prize money here otherwise. Let’s wait a little more.”

Just as KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi were enjoying their coffee.

Just as KangYoon had said, Kim DoMin came back to the office with Bang SanHyuk. Kim DoMin lowered his head in embarrassment, but Bang SanHyuk looked as though he had done nothing wrong.

“I apologize for the delay. Can we continue?”

“Sure.”

KangYoon continued the conversation as though nothing had happened.

Like that, the business between Battlemonsters and MG Entertainment began.

“This is our office.”

KangYoon was led by Kim DoMin. The first thing, or rather,

things, that caught his eyes were the trophies and certificates that filled the glass showcase windows.

“That’s a lot of trophies.”

KangYoon couldn’t hide his surprise after seeing trophies and certificates written in English. The grandeur of those prizes received internationally since the year 2000 when the team was created, was nothing to joke about. KangYoon subconsciously clapped after seeing the 8 years of hard work. (T/N: Oh, we’re still in 2008...)

Kim DoMin became proud after seeing KangYoon admiring those prizes.

“They are our pride. It feels good that you’re acknowledging them.”

“You are at the peak of one field. You must have worked very hard.”

“Thank you.”

There were even grand prizes from global competitions as well. KangYoon could catch a glimpse of their pride from the photo where they were smiling with the Korean national flag in front of them.

After seeing the trophies, KangYoon sat down. It was time to work.

“15 members. 1 hour. The theme and the venue are still not decided.”

“You mentioned around 200 people as the audience, but in my opinion, I think there should be at least 500.”

“500?”

Kim DoMin’s eyes widened after hearing KangYoon’s words. Although they had performed in front of more people in global competitions, he didn’t think that bringing 500 people in their solo

stage was easy.

“For now, yes. There isn’t much budget but... since we have plenty of time, I’m going to consider many methods.”

“Is there anything we must do to help?”

“I think I’ll be needing a lot of help, yes. But we’ll do most of the complex stuff, so you don’t need to worry about that.”

Kim DoMin sighed in relief after hearing KangYoon’s words. They had signed the contract with MG Entertainment precisely for that, and he was relieved to hear that.

The two entered the practice studio where the team members were in the middle of practice. Men with a lot of muscles were dancing under Bang SanHyuk’s lead. But due to this being practice, they didn’t show the razor-sharp synchronization between the members.

“Hmm....”

However, KangYoon was surprised to see such difficult moves. Seeing them doing handstands and arching their legs at the same time, and seeing how flexible they were with their body, he felt that it was a cool dance that was hard to see even on TVs.

‘But it’s still practice....’

Seeing the weak white light, this didn’t seem to be perfect yet. However, his eyes were drawn to it since their actions were very cool.

“JungYeon! Watch out for your arm! If you aren’t careful, you’ll snap your arm!”

“Sorry!”

“WooJoong! Your neck!”

“Yes!”

Bang SanHyuk shouted his lungs out as he taught his juniors.

Kim DoMin told KangYoon that that was because a loud caution was necessary for them to focus. KangYoon took out a pen and paper and started writing down what he needed while observing their practice.

After a while, break time started. KangYoon approached Bang SanHyuk.

“You came.”

He was wearing a sleeveless shirt and was sweating from all over his body. KangYoon gave him a towel. He accepted and asked.

“Team Leader. Can you look for a B-girl by any chance?”

“A B-girl? Do you mean a female B-boy?”

“Yes.”

KangYoon asked for a reason at the sudden question. Then, he continued speaking while wiping away his sweat.

“As you see here, all the members of our team are men. In this field, B-girls are a rare existence. Even if we try to recruit one now, it will be very difficult to look for someone who’s proficient. Can I ask you to do this?”

“A B-girl, you say... is it fine if she’s a singer?”

“It doesn’t really matter... but to be honest with you, it will be hard for any singer to keep up with our moves. Dances shown on TV are a lot easier than what we do after all....”

Bang SanHyuk was filled with confidence. However, KangYoon admitted that. Breakdancing was very difficult after all. No ordinary dancers would be able to keep up with their choreography.

“Okay, I’ll look into that.”

“Please.”

Bang SanHyuk finished his words and turned around. Actually,

he was already half-skeptical about KangYoon being able to recruit one.

“Well then! Let’s resume practice!”

Thinking that he should look for one himself if KangYoon couldn’t find one, bang SanHyuk resumed practice with the rest of the team.

Chapter 74. In a Widening Stage! (1)

To congratulate Gye HyoMin's successful solo recital, KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi hosted a simple gathering. No, since the venue was a high-class bar, it wasn't exactly 'simple'. The two split off from Gye HyoMin for a second round and headed to another place where they could talk. President Lee HyunJi had called for Professor Choi ChanYang as well.

In a bar's booth with a faint background music, they cheered with their wine glasses and congratulated each other.

"Congratulations, Team Leader KangYoon."

"Congratulations to you too, President."

"Haha, this is nice."

The amber-colored western wine was very bitter. However, with the taste of success, it tasted very sweet. Alcoholic drinks were always good when it came together with success.

Just as their gathering ripened, Professor Choi ChanYang spoke out with a reddened face.

"Mr. KangYoon. Do you perhaps have a dream?"

"A dream, you say?"

KangYoon also asked back with a half-drunk face. President Lee HyunJi felt that this would be interesting and waited for his answer with a relaxed expression.

"A dream.... Just living an ordinary life without worries?"

"No way. A person like you? Put some more effort in."

President Lee HyunJi teased KangYoon. Such simple life when he had such a talent? She thought that that was nonsense.

"Hahaha, it's true. People are satisfied with just living an ordinary life."

“Sheesh, you’re no fun.”

But that made the mood awkward. Then, Professor Choi ChanYang mediated between the two.

“It looks like there’s a gap between you two since you’re the president while you’re an employee.”

“You’re right. I’m disappointed. Can’t we be frank with each other? Looks like I should start first.”

She seemed to want to know what KangYoon was really thinking as she took out her side of the story first. Her playful smile was all but gone, and her serious expression told the other two that this was her being serious.

“President Lee HyunJi of MG Entertainment. It has quite a ring to it. However, I’m just someone who was put into the position, and therein lies my limits. Moreover, what I want clashes very frequently with what the company wants.”

“What are the differences?”

“I strive for a general entertainment business. Like the general music business, we two are doing right now – something that includes all kinds of music. That’s why Team Leader KangYoon and I strike a chord. Chairman Won JinMoon also knows this and put us two together.”

“Then didn’t you just achieve your dream?”

Asked KangYoon. However, President Lee HyunJi shook her fingers. She denied that.

“Fufu, is that really the case? Listen to me for a little more. I have a big confidence in running businesses. I also think of myself as a capable businesswoman. That’s why the chairman likes me. I’m very enthusiastic, follows orders, and manage well. But I don’t really like my current company. You know, MG Entertainment has its preferences regarding their talents. It sometimes pains me to see talented people being forced to shift their colors.

“Then you should just change that, no?”

“This is something that both the chairman and the board of directors agree on. That is because it’s the safe method. The advantage of making a celebrity according to a manual is that it’s safe. However, it’s hard to make a long-running celebrity. I put claims in multiples of times because I wanted to change this, but.... Fuu. It’s not something I can do by myself. Recently, I’m even thinking of leaving the company and start anew by myself.”

“I think you’re going into sensitive topic there....”

KangYoon panicked. Although they were in a private room, he still looked around. She smirked after seeing KangYoon like that.

“You’re right. It is a very sensitive topic. I would have never told you this had I not believed in you fully. I was also just thinking about it, and this would have never escaped my mouth – I would have just lived on while taking care of the celebrities while competing with the directors just as the chairman has intended. That is, until....”

President Lee HyunJi pointed towards KangYoon. KangYoon put down the wine glass he was holding.

“You appeared and changed my mind. Team Leader Lee KangYoon.”

“.....”

“It is safe for the celebrity to shift their color to the company’s preferences, but that means that they won’t have any unique traits. Without traits unique to them, it is very hard to give rise to celebrities that are long-running. At this rate, MG Entertainment will meet a crisis. However, since the immediate profits are bigger, they are probably going to keep ‘manufacturing’ replacement celebrities.”

“So you’re referring to the singers that got disbanded when I got employed.”

“Precisely. However, if it’s you, Team Leader KangYoon, I think you will show me a new model. Eddios, Min JinSeo, and even JooAh. All three of them are very different to the models that the company had shown the world until now. The 6-people girl group known as Eddios are known not only because of their group but their individuality as well while you also achieved success with Min JinSeo as an actress – something that the company has never done until now. With JooAh, you created, for us, a new market in Japan, showing that JooAh’s talents will work even in Japan. Would this have been possible if they were forced to change their colors to match the company’s preferences? Probably not. That’s it. They will definitely meet a limit eventually.”

“.....”

“The chairman and the directors are very affixed by their social circle as ‘company’. I’m not saying that the company is not important, I’m just saying that the individualities of our members are important as well. This... is not negotiable. I will probably... walk a different path from the company in the future.”

President Lee HyunJi showed her true opinion in her passionate speech. This was what she truly thought – something that she had never revealed to anyone before. Both KangYoon and Professor Choi ChanYang were honestly surprised. They didn’t even imagine this.

President Lee HyunJi seemed to be thirsty as she drank a glass of water in one gulp. The gulping sound rang out in the room. Although the sound was loud, she did not care. The heavy atmosphere made her forget about the embarrassment.

KangYoon fell silent. This was an unexpected blow for him. It wouldn’t be proper for him to stay still. However, he couldn’t say anything easily. Knowing what he was thinking, Professor Choi ChanYang spoke up first.

“I’ve known HyunJi for over 10 years, but it’s the first time I’ve

seen her like this.”

“Really?”

“In fact, I’m teaching students right now.... But I also have the desire to run on the field.”

KangYoon’s gaze headed to Professor Choi ChanYang. President Lee HyunJi also listened in.

“I am a very shy person, so I’m really afraid of the actual scenes where the actual things happen. But my heart is always there. I want to make a song one time and make people cry. And train younglings as a trainer as well.”

“You work as a vocal trainer as well?”

“I did, as a part-time job while I was in college.”

“Uhh, wait. Didn’t you two go to the same college?”

“No, it was high school. After graduating, I didn’t see HyunJi for a long time since she went overseas to study.”

Professor Choi’s story was over.

Now it was KangYoon’s turn. He thought about it for a moment.

‘A dream, huh....’

The other two had already spoken what was on their minds. Dreams – the most important, and the most difficult value. Thinking about it, he became thirsty. KangYoon instantly drained the strong wine.

“Calm down.”

President Lee HyunJi tried to stop him, but KangYoon kept emptying his glass. He poured a new one and drained it again. He felt as though the bittersweet taste was dragging out what was inside him. President Lee HyunJi tried to stop him in a panic, but KangYoon stopped her. He finally felt like he was drunk.

He then started talking about what he was really thinking.

“...My dream is to make someone like Samuel Johnson with my own hands.”

“Samuel Johnson? Whoa.... That’s a big dream.”

(T/N: Mini-spoiler: Michael Jackson)

President Lee HyunJi blinked a few times. She was surprised KangYoon’s unbelievable scale and still laughed. Samuel Johnson was the greatest singer birthed in the 20th century. His concerts would gather 50,000 people normally, while his albums sold out in millions. Not to mention his huge donations to charity. To create such a singer....

“It won’t be easy in Korea. You should go to America.”

Professor Choi ChanYang advised. However, KangYoon shook his head.

“America, Korea, Japan – I don’t care. I think being restricted by location is a foolish thing. What’s important is to let the singers sing what they want and let the audience listen to what they want. I think that’s the basics. Once I do that... perhaps I might reach a Samuel Johnson one day.”

“...You really don’t like cutting corners.”

President Lee HyunJi nodded her head in acceptance. However, she didn’t seem satisfied with that answer yet. She asked him directly.

“So, are you planning to stay in the company?”

“.....”

KangYoon reserved his words. This was the most difficult question. Until now, he was asked his views on the industry and his job, and now he was asked what he was going to do in the future. This wasn’t just probing him. She was basically saying ‘tell me since I told you’. Professor Choi ChanYang was also waiting for his answer with his unique smile.

President Lee HyunJi told him a lot about herself so he also decided to be frank.

“...I can’t stay forever.”

“Do you have thoughts on doing your own business?”

President Lee HyunJi finally seemed satisfied with his answer.

“...I also don’t plan to stay within the boundaries of MG forever. As you said, President, MG is a place where the celebrity conforms to the company. The company will indeed reach its limits by itself. I will also meet a limit in my scope of work. For my own growth, I will eventually leave the company.”

“Are you going to start your own business?”

“For now, I’m not so sure... but that is one of my plans.”

KangYoon raised his glass. He had voiced out his thoughts. President Lee HyunJi cheered with her glass with a smile, thinking that she had received a satisfying answer.

“When you do your business later, Team Leader KangYoon, I’ll be your first investor.”

“I’ll be thankful. I don’t have a lot of money, after all...”

“You earn tons nowadays, and you don’t have money? Well, you’ll give me a seat too, right?”

“Hahaha, of course.”

The mood was getting brighter, so Professor Choi ChanYang also joined them.

“Can I join in on that as well?”

“Hahaha, sure. You’ll always be welcome.”

KangYoon did not refuse him. Professor Choi ChanYang cheered with the other two and emptied his glass in one go.

“I’m confident in raising young ones and in composition. I’ll go immediately once you call me.”

“Hahahaha, that’s good. Cheers!”

All of this started off from a drunk talk. However, these were just their wishes. The three exchanged their thoughts, and their views were very similar. As their views matched, they got along very well and became even closer to each other.

And the gathering that day became the start of a ‘big bang’.

“Ugh.... My head hurts.”

KangYoon woke up with a huge headache from the hangover. He walked out to the living room. When he washed his face, and headed to the kitchen, the sound of bubbling tickled his ears.

“Just how much did you drink yesterday?”

In the kitchen, HeeYoon was cooking blowfish soup.

“I ate out with the president yesterday. I might have drunk a little too much.”

“Do be lenient on yourself with alcohol in the future. You came back very drunk yesterday.”

“Sorry about that.”

KangYoon apologized, and HeeYoon gave him breakfast without nagging him any further.

After eating, KangYoon went to work immediately.

After a short meeting in the morning, he headed to Onsu-dong where the breakdancing team, Battlemonsters, were practicing. Their studio was there.

By 11 o’clock, the team members started coming in one by one. Everyone looked very skinny, but their legs and arms were packed with muscles. When KangYoon was watching them warm up, Bang SanHyuk and Kim DoMin came to greet him. After a light greeting, the three headed to the office.

“The most important thing right now is advertising.”

The two strongly agreed with what KangYoon said. Although Battlemonsters were skillful enough to take the grand prize in global competitions, their moves were just ‘slightly cooler dancing’ in the views of the public. The reality was harsh.

“There are two months left until the stage. Now....”

“Do you need us for the advertising?”

Bang SanHyuk asked. He seemed to have correctly interpreted what KangYoon was implying and asked directly.

“Yes, I will be needing your help.”

“Didn’t you say that you will take care of everything else when we signed the contract?”

Bang SanHyuk narrowed his eyes. Kim DoMin tried to stop him in a panic, but KangYoon was faster. Unlike what Kim DoMin was worried about, KangYoon didn’t look panicked at all.

“As for the venue, I have reserved the small theater from the Bucheon Art Center. Breakdancing is a culture liked by youths. Our main target audience will be them. I’m planning to host a street performance at a place where they gather a lot.”

“Bucheon Art Center? 200 people will be easy then. Understood. Well, then. A street performance eh....”

Kim DoMin seemed doubtful as he asked a question.

“There are many things to do for a street performance. We need to ask for permission from the district office, and we’ll have to rent equipment as well, it will take a lot of time.”

“Only three people will go. The performance time will be 30 minutes. We’ll only be bringing one loudspeaker and pull back after giving them a glimpse.”

“Hm.... A performance shouldn’t be so simple....”

Bang SanHyuk didn't seem to like it, but Kim DoMin was different.

“Hey, I think it's okay. It's just for a moment.”

“We don't even have time to practice. Even if it's just 30 minutes, it would be two hours if we count transportation time.”

KangYoon continued to speak, as though saying that there was no need to worry.

“There are 15 members in the team, and the members performing will only be three. From my research so far, I've gathered that there are many performances featuring 3 people. We'll be on rotation with these performances. It will be once every three days. There's a little less than 2 months left, so you can say that one person will only do one or two performances.”

“Let's leave me and DoMin out since we have to train them, so 13 members.... That's 2 times, huh. I think that's fine. Understood, I'll tell the others. Do we start today?”

KangYoon's words weren't wrong. Bang SanHyuk accepted after a little bit of thinking. A leader was a leader alright. KangYoon told them the spots he had looked up beforehand and what they had to prepare. The two accepted.

After telling them everything he needed to, KangYoon left the office room.

“He sure acts proud, but I think he's reliable. He did reserve a theater fast.”

Muttered Bang SanHyuk after seeing KangYoon watch the members practicing.

“Money sure is good. We can hire guys like him.”

Kim DoMin went a step further. The two discussed who to send this afternoon and left the office room to practice.

In the afternoon, KangYoon headed to somewhere near a department store in Bucheon, where many students gathered along with three members of Battlemonsters.

“That’s a lot of people....”

One of the members, Jeon SeungJin, was surprised to see so many people clad in uniform. Seeming to agree, Ji SeokHyun and Han WooJoong were the same.

“There’s not a lot of time. Let’s go over there and get ready.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon grabbed the three boys who were knocked out from seeing girls in school uniform and took a spot in the middle of the street. There was only one audio equipment today. KangYoon took care of the speakers and the three got ready to do their performance.

“Please guard this line so others can’t come in.”

KangYoon had asked the company for a little help just in case. Thanks to that, he was with sturdy men from a security company.

Seeing three rather charming men standing in a formation, boys and girls in school uniform started gathering. Seeing people gather, KangYoon immediately played the music.

Jeon SeungJin started off the performance with a wave according to the groovy beats. The light start became more and more exaggerated, and eventually, he started doing big moves by doing a single-handed handstand and other delicate moves.

“Wowww!”

Teenage girls became excited over the most minute things. It was obvious that they were going to cheer over something like this. The surroundings were already filled with people clad in school uniform. Everyone took out their phones and took photos and videos.

– It’s up.

– Got it. Thanks for your work.

He got a message from the PR team. The news was that these photos and videos being taken by the people were being spread throughout social networking services. KangYoon asked the PR team to fan the flames and gave a few other orders.

The short performance ended quite soon. The highlight was Jeon SeungJin’s head spin. Wearing a red helmet, he spun around numerous times on his head and received applause from the audience.

Then he stood up and took out some posters from the floor.

– Meet us in the Bucheon Hall at May 16th 5 o’clock~

“Kyaaaaaaaah~!”

The short street performance ended with the incredible cheers(?) of the girls. Restraining the three members from doing something more due to the shouts of the audience, KangYoon immediately ordered for retreat. The team members left the crowd among the disappointments of the people.

Marketing was on the rise thanks to the success of the street performance. The performances of Battlemonsters were going up on various SNS and Utube, as well as feedback from various blogs.

‘We’re lacking a big hit.’

Even while reading the compliments from the web, KangYoon felt that something was lacking. Cool performances, big moves from fancy men. It was definitely something worth paying to watch. However, something was missing.

‘A star? Should I look into MinAh’s schedule?’

Just as when KangYoon was contemplating in his office, he heard knock. Just as KangYoon was about to say something, the door

burst open and a woman came in.

“It’s me!”

She, appearing with a loud entrance, was JooAh.

“Yeon JooAh?”

“Fufufu! It’s been a while!”

KangYoon welcomed JooAh who he hadn’t seen for a long time. She put the Japanese snacks she brought on the table and sat on the sofa. Meanwhile, KangYoon went to get some coffee.

JooAh had just finished her things in Japan and was now on a rest period. She went to greet her parents, and visited the company just to greet and came here first, or so she said.

“I came here first so you should be more grateful.”

“Sure, sure. So, you aren’t fighting with Producer Akabashi anymore?”

“Of course. There’s no greater pair in Japan than us two.”

JooAh shrugged her shoulders, implying that there was nothing to worry about. KangYoon was satisfied to see JooAh in a good mood.

“I heard you were doing uh... General Music? Or something?”

“Oh, yeah. You’re right. I’m so busy right now.”

“From what I was told, I heard you selected BGMs for shoe retailers or something, right? You should focus on producing stages. That’s the best for you. Oh, yeah. I also heard you were doing something related to breakdancing this time, right?”

“You’re quick on the news. It’s a team called Battlemonsters.”

“Really? Those guys are amazing. I like that team. I’m a complete fan.”

“Really?”

“Uh, oppa. Can I, uh, go there too as a B-girl? I have confidence....”

JooAh’s eyes were shining with interest. KangYoon thought for a moment but shook his head, thinking that it would do more bad than good.

“That doesn’t sound so bad, but you’re too strong, so no.”

“Eeh? What do you mean by that? You think I’m not up for the challenge? Don’t you know that I’m the best dancer in this field?”

“It’s not that, it’s just...uh, nothing.”

KangYoon halted mid-way.

“What the hell? Why did you suddenly stop?”

“.....”

“Hey! What is it really!”

JooAh seemed frustrated to see KangYoon hesitant to speak. The normal KangYoon would never do this. Since she was the impatient sort, she kept nagging KangYoon for answers. Eventually, KangYoon ended up saying the truth due to the pressure.

“What? They’re really looking for a B-girl?”

“...But not you. You need to rest when you ca-“

“I’ll do it!”

“.....”

KangYoon seemed to be at a loss for words.

“I’m gonna do it!”

“But you’re on a rest period.”

“That’s why I have all the time in the world.”

JooAh really wanted this B-girl job. This was a strange scene where it was KangYoon was the one who wanted a B-girl, but was

also the one refusing, while JooAh wanting to do it when she didn't have to.

After quarreling for a while, JooAh turned serious.

“Hey, think about it. Honestly speaking, it will be good if not better, if I participate. What's there to not accept?”

“Did you get permission from the company?”

“It's me who wants to do it. They can't stop me.”

That was absurd. KangYoon smacked her on the forehead.

“Hey, what was that for! Don't do this to me.”

“It's because you're being absurd. Why do you want to do it so much?”

“Because it will help me in the future. Learning breakdancing is a big opportunity for me too. It might not earn me money right now, but I bet you there will be a time where I'll use it.”

JooAh continued to persuade KangYoon. KangYoon narrowed his eyes still. JooAh kept nagging on anyway.

“Please let me do it, please? You have enough power to do that, don't you? Please~.”

JooAh clung on to KangYoon even as far as acting cute. She kept shaking his arms and asked him with a cute expression, but KangYoon kept silent.

‘Honestly, if it's JooAh, I can't ask for more.’

However, unlike what JooAh was thinking, KangYoon was thinking of something completely different. Objectively speaking, if JooAh appeared in this show, she would definitely be the icing on the cake. He would also have an easier time persuading the higher-ups if JooAh ‘requested’ to be on and not against her will.

KangYoon felt that this was good enough and spoke out.

“...Okay. I'll try.”

“Really? Don’t go back on your words now.”

JooAh didn’t know what KangYoon was thinking and only cheered.

“I need to get permission from the chairman.... Ugh, how many things do you think I have to take care of every time you try to do something? Ah, my head. Sheesh, every single time, you are so....”

“Fine, fine. But how many fans do you think will come if I get involved? Isn’t that good for you too?”

“Gosh darn it. I have work to do, so be on your way. I need to speak to the chairman as the leader of the team.”

“Heh, then do your best at work. I believe in you.”

JooAh thought that she had achieved her objective and left with a bright smile on her face. When she left, KangYoon took out some papers from his desk drawers. It was a document titled ‘Battlemonsters Featuring Request – JooAh – ‘.

“It does prickle a little.”

KangYoon threw away the same document, just written for Jung MinAh, and took that document and headed to the chairman’s office.

Chapter 75. In a Widening Stage! (2)

“Such nice weather today.”

HeeYoon walked on the grass under the warm sun. By her side was her friend, Park SoYoung, who was holding hands with her. The two were embracing the warmth of spring.

“The weather today is awesome, isn’t it?”

“Yup, yup. It’s so good.”

“On a day like this, you should be outside. You shouldn’t stay home all the time.”

“You’re right.”

Park SoYoung invited HeeYoon, who insisted on staying at home, to her university. She passed her exams to Hallyeo Arts University and was now living in Seoul.

The two became hungry after enjoying the warmth of spring, so they headed to the student cafeteria. Since lunch hours have passed, the cafeteria was relatively empty. After buying some food to eat, they sat down at a table when they found some people giving glances at them.

“I think those guys are staring over here.”

“HeeYoon, don’t look at them. They aren’t good people.”

“Why?”

“They’re the kind of people that want to show off in front of freshmen girls. HyunAh-unni said so.”

Park SoYoung shivered. Like what she said, those group of men were actually approaching a woman they thought was ‘fine’. Though, they were rejected immediately.... Watching them, HeeYoon and Park SoYoung giggled.

“Pffft. I think they did that on purpose to make us laugh.”

“SoYoung. Don’t be so harsh. But you know.... It’s fun.”

“HeeYoon, do you know that you are even scarier?”

The two continued chatting while eating tteokbokki. Since both of them lived in Seoul, the two met quite often. The more they talked, the more they got along. Thanks to that, they had reached a point where they could talk about sensitive topics.

“HeeYoon, aren’t you going to go to university?”

“I do.... But my brother wants me to wait a little more.”

“KangYoon-oppa did? Why?”

“Apparently, he’s preparing something in America. If everything goes well, he said that we would be going to America, so he told me to wait on going to college in Korea. Instead, I am learning music from a private academy. I’m also learning English too.”

“Oh, so you aren’t taking CSAT(College Scholastic Ability Exam, uni entrance exams)?”

“I might if I have to later, but right now, I don’t.”

HeeYoon wasn’t walking on what was considered a ‘normal’ path by the others. From the moment she decided to do music, her path had strayed from the ‘normal’ path. Park SoYoung was the same. Perhaps that contributed to why the two got along so well.

“When are you going to America then?”

“I don’t know yet. But my brother said it won’t take too—long.”

“Really? Are you going to stay there for long?”

“I don’t know. He didn’t say.”

“Your brother has a lot of secrets. Looks like he needs some scolding.”

“My words exactly.”

The two girls kept chatting on about KangYoon. Though,

HeeYoon cut the conversation off once it went too far....

After it was decided that JooAh was going to appear on the breakdancing stage, KangYoon hurried to prepare the other things that he had to do for that. If JooAh appeared even for a little bit, it was very likely that her fans would come to the concert as well. Moreover, there were also the fans from the street performances. There was no way the small theater would be able to host them all.

“The large theater?”

The deputy head of the Bucheon Art Center, Lee HyunShik, immediately narrowed his head after looking at the documents.

“Fortunately, there are no reservations for the 16th of May. However, there are two performances that are currently being evaluated. If you wish to apply, you’ll have to give up on the small theater as well. Is that fine with you?”

In one word, it was a gamble. Deputy Head Lee HyunShik said that this wasn’t something he decided alone but with the center owners and other personnel.

“How long does it take to decide?”

“Around 3 days. Personally, I wouldn’t recommend this. Thanks to our facilities being relatively good compared to the others, there’s quite a lot of competition.”

“3 days.... Understood. Let’s do it.”

KangYoon didn’t look backward. Although it did scare him a little to think that he would have to give up on the small theater, he definitely needs a larger theater.

“Then I’ll tell you the results via phone call.”

As expected of a civil servant belonging to the city, he was very stiff. KangYoon finished his work and left the Bucheon Art Center.

‘But just in case....’

Just in case, he inquired into a few more theaters before coming back to the studio in Onsu-dong.

“One, two. One, two.”

In the studio, Bang SanHyuk and the other team members were in the middle of practice. They were practicing high-difficulty moves alongside rhythmical music and were sweating bullets. They greeted KangYoon before going back to practice.

After a long period of time, it became time to rest. Bang SanHyuk approached KangYoon, who was looking through the paperwork in the office.

“What happened to the B-girl I talked about with you last time?”

“I got one.”

“Oh, really?”

His expression, which was stiff all the time when he was working with KangYoon, became a little brighter. B-girls were that important.

“What kind of a person is she?”

“It’s uh....”

However, KangYoon had a hard time saying it.

“You didn’t just pick anyone, right?”

“How could I?”

“The song we are doing with the B-girl will be very important. That’s why I left it to you...”

Bang SanHyuk growled at KangYoon every time he saw him. He didn’t like him from the first day the two met. Like always, KangYoon tried to just smooth it over, but it didn’t seem to be that easy. Bang SanHyuk was about to nitpick that problem with him.

That is until he heard that the members outside the office were getting louder.

“What the hell....”

The studio just got loud all of a sudden. It wasn't from just one or two people. Having missed his time to nitpick with KangYoon, Bang SanHyuk headed to the practice room while grumbling.

“Whoa!”

He went there without thinking much, but he shouted subconsciously after looking at the lady in front of her. No, it wasn't just him. The rest of the team members were just the same. In the practice room was a lady wearing baggy clothes and a baseball cap, who had entered under Kim DoMin's lead.

“Hello! I'm Yeon JooAh. I heard a lot from KangYoon-oppa. I came here for the B-girl appearance this time. I may be lacking, but please take care of me.”

“.....”

Even seeing someone for the first time, Bang SanHyuk became dumbfounded for a moment. The rest of the team were already giving glances at JooAh, who wore light makeup.

Bang SanHyuk felt prickled. JooAh was definitely fit for this job. However, what about her costs? Would that fit their budget? His head became very complex. However, the one who had to calculate that all, Kim DoMin, was just all smiles.

“Uuh? Bro, what's up with you.”

“Shut up and follow me.”

Bang SanHyuk led Kim DoMin to the bathroom. He even locked the door and asked in seriousness.

“Hey, are you crazy? Let's say that that KangYoon guy wanted more money, but why did you stay still? Are you insane?”

“What?”

Even when Bang SanHyuk said something serious, Kim DoMin didn't have much of a reaction. Rather, he looked like he had done

nothing wrong. That made Bang SanHyuk even angrier.

“Hey, you piece of-!”

Bang SanHyuk grabbed Kim DoMin’s collar and pushed him into the wall. He was exploding. Even when he could get angry, Kim DoMin stayed calm.

“Oh that. You don’t need to worry about that. You’re talking about JooAh’s performance fees, right?”

“You think I can’t worry? If everything goes wrong, we may go bankrupt regardless of the concert!”

“Sheesh, don’t be in such a hurry. JooAh isn’t going to get any performance fees.”

“What?”

Bang SanHyuk was dumbfounded. How the hell did that work? He couldn’t understand how such an expensive singer like Yeon JooAh could forgo the performance fees. Kim DoMin put Bang SanHyuk’s arms on his shoulders away, since they had lost their strength.

“The condition is that we teach JooAh breakdancing. It’s like a guest appearance. Team Leader KangYoon even stamped it.”

“Teach breakdancing? To her? So, what do they get?”

“JooAh’s long-term development, as well as ties, or so they said. The company also permitted it.”

“Huh... Are they some charity? What do they see in us to give us so much?”

It was a continuation of dumbfounded-ness. He couldn’t understand why they were willing to go so far – it wasn’t like they profited a lot off this. Of course, it was good; it was the best. Once he factored in JooAh’s fans coming to the concert....

“It looks like Team Leader KangYoon’s influence is great in that company. We’re in the good since we get to profit....”

“What the.... Is he on our side or theirs?”

“I also found it absurd. We should help them big next time. But JooAh... it will be hard to repay that, won’t it?”

“Sheesh... Fine, I get it. I’ll teach her myself, so don’t worry about it. Should I be rejoicing or be sad....”

Although he said that, his attitude had already turned around. Before and after he went into the bathroom, was drastically different.

“On this part, like this....”

JooAh learned one difficult breakdancing move after another. She already topped out most people in regard to dancing anyway. She quickly learned what Bang SanHyuk taught her.

“Should I try doing a handstand too?”

“Can you do it?”

“I did it a lot when I was a trainee. Just hold me a little.”

JooAh was instead enthusiastic. She grooved along with the music before she did a handstand with just one hand.

“Good, very good! Wow! You’re the best!”

Bang SanHyuk didn’t hold back on his praises, which he rarely ever said normally. Even though she was a ‘superstar’, she didn’t act boastful, was enthusiastic during practice, and even became a mood maker for the rest of the team. There was no more perfect girl than her. She was quite humble to the point that he almost considered her his own team rather than a superstar.

“As for the swiping, you move your legs like this....”

Bang SanHyuk wasn’t the sort of guy who talked a lot, and acted a lot normally, and was normally on the quiet side, but this time, he was very enthusiastic in teaching JooAh.

‘Captain’s a guy too.’

‘Phew. Someone send him on a marriage.’(E/N: probably means that he should get married)

The team members only sighed while shaking their heads, but the overall atmosphere of the team was very bright. Adding a single woman too this man-cave lightened everything up.

“I still can’t believe that JooAh is here.”

Kim DoMin was still dumbfounded by the fact that JooAh was practicing in the same room as them. However, KangYoon just took it lightly.

“JooAh has some random moments. She can’t control herself once she’s into something.”

“Haha. That’s something I didn’t know. Even though she isn’t getting paid....”

“She’s doing this for fun since it’s her resting period anyway. I judged that it wasn’t a necessity to produce profit no matter what. Instead, you need to show her what world-class really is.”

“Don’t worry about that.”

Kim DoMin smiled at KangYoon’s words. With their worries about money gone, he felt a lot better. While he felt the power of a big entertainment company, the thought that KangYoon was very considerate and could be trusted also pervaded him.

The two finished their talk and headed to the practice room. The practice room was currently occupied by JooAh practicing with Bang SanHyuk and the rest of the team.

“Oppa!”

JooAh waved her hand at KangYoon. KangYoon also waved his hand and approached Bang SanHyuk.

“Rest!”

“Yes!”

A rather louder-than-usual shout filled the room and Bang SanHyuk, KangYoon, and Kim DoMin sat down together. JooAh said that there was a need to get closer to the team and learned from them. Everyone wanted to teach her.

“Miss JooAh’s personality is very good.”

Said Bang SanHyuk without thinking much after looking at JooAh who was being the mood maker for the rest of the team. However, Kim DoMin immediately realized what was happening after looking at his eyes.

‘He’s completely fallen for her.’

Kim DoMin only shrugged his shoulders.

KangYoon asked Bang SanHyuk whether JooAh was really fit for this performance. Bang SanHyuk non-committedly said she was alright, but Kim DoMin interjected.

“Bro, be honest. Isn’t she the best?”

“Not really the best....”

“Sheesh, our bro can’t be honest. He must be rea~~lly satisfied right now.”

“You little.....”

It was a bullseye, and Bang SanHyuk grumbled for a little before saying that he was worried about JooAh being surrounded by the team and stood up. He chased away all of them who were trying to show off their skills and took their place. Kim DoMin only giggled while looking at that.

“Lol, oh sorry. Our bro can’t be that honest.”

“It’s fine. This is fun. But how many songs do you need JooAh for?”

“From what I know, just one piece.”

“Just one piece?”

KangYoon turned his gaze to the order of events. That piece was placed nicely in the middle. However, he didn't seem satisfied and tilted his head.

“Do you not like it?”

“We're using JooAh, so it's a little bit of a pity. JooAh's fans will definitely be there, but if it's just 5 minutes, I think the fans will be slightly disappointed as well.”

“Should we add another one?”

“Would that be fine with you?”

“I think 10 minutes should be fine. In fact, the others will rejoice as well. However, I need to look into a suitable song. We only have one piece that requires a B-girl.”

“Can I see it with you?”

KangYoon and Kim DoMin went to the office. After that was a war between them and the music and videos. They referred to various dance videos and looked for pieces that JooAh may be good in, but it wasn't easy to find something so quickly.

The time was now evening.

Some of the team members left the studio for the street performance, and Kim Do Min, JooAh, and Bang SanHyuk entered the office where KangYoon was.

“Oppa, let's eat. Ehk? You are still watching that?”

She was surprised to see KangYoon still watching videos. She could also see lots of traces of KangYoon's notes. Even the nitpicky Bang SanHyuk was careful in his speech.

“Why don't you have your meal first?”

“That's right, oppa. You should eat first before you work.”

In the end, KangYoon paused the video and headed to a nearby

restaurant for their dinner.

Their dinner was Sundubu-jjigae. KangYoon literally inhaled the food and started contemplating again. Even Kim DoMin had to say something.

“It’s the Team Leader who can’t stop once you’re into something.”

“He’s the guy I trust the most in the company. Only because he’s like that am I standing here now.”

“Oho, you worked together before?”

“When I first went to Japan, he was at the vanguard.”

Kim DoMin’s eyes widened at JooAh’s words. Bang SanHyuk was the same. JooAh kept speaking while giving out signatures to the fans who approached her.

“I don’t work with just anyone. That’s why I’m rumored to have a shitty personality. But when I work with him, I just leave everything to him without saying much. He does all the contemplating and solves all the problems. I only need to focus on my own work.”

Bang SanHyuk and Kim DoMin also knew the rumors about JooAh. Of course, most of them were straight-up guesses from random websites. However, it was quite interesting to hear about her from the person herself.

“Puppeteering?”

KangYoon kept his patience despite the slow internet speeds and kept looking for one video after the other. This video was about a theatrical play, and it was quite deep – a person was being manipulated with strings by another, and that controller was also being manipulated as well. KangYoon showed this video to the rest.

“Can we make a dance out of this?”

“What?”

Bang SanHyuk didn't understand him. A dance from a play? Everyone else was the same. KangYoon continued his explanation.

“People are always bound by something. And there's something that controls them. We'll show that through a dance. It will be easier to do a razor-sharp precision sync as well. I think we can also show the drastic contrast between light and dark. What do you think?”

“Wait a moment. I think we did that once before.”

After hearing Kim DoMin's words, KangYoon's expression became a lot brighter.

“You did?”

“Yes, it's called ‘Puppeteering’, and we took it to a competition before....”

“Why don't we try that one?”

With his words, the stage preparation accelerated rapidly.

Chapter 76. In a Widening Stage! (3)

(T/N: [] speech is spoken in Japanese)

[Is it here?]

Producer Akabashi was leading a chubby man with a thick beard in front of MG Entertainment.

[Come quick.]

[Slow down, I'm tired.]

The chubby body definitely did seem like it would induce severe fatigue. He was quite unlike your ordinary Japanese man, who ate relatively little. Producer Akabashi, by his side, sighed at him.

[You should really lose some weight.]

[Why are you talking about my weight now?]

[Fine. The president must be waiting. Let's go.]

The two people went past the busy lobby and headed to the president's office. President Lee HyunJi welcomed them there.

[Hello, and welcome.]

[It's been a while, HyunJi-san.]

[Hello, Akabashi-san. Is the person next to you Oda Futaba-san?]

The man called Oda extended his hand out to shake hands. Lee HyunJi lightly introduced herself and led them to the place. With some snacks, they introduced themselves, and they got to work.

[A concert in Korea, you say. How large are you thinking of?]

[Around 1,000 to 3,000 people as the audience.]

[You're coming all the way to Korea for this, would that really be fine for you?]

Oda waved his hands, as though he didn't care about such things.

[I only want a stage where I can enjoy myself with the fans. I

don't ask for a lot of profit.]

[It will be very difficult for us to produce a concert purely for entertainment.]

President Lee HyunJi drew the line there. Many singers were willing to do 'free concerts' for their fans, but as a company, that was practically a loss for them. Profit was a very important element. There were many cases where a singer and his/her company fought over this.

Fortunately, Oda wasn't someone with a biased view.

[What should I do?]

[It won't be that different from what you usually do. Oda-san can just focus on the stage. As for the audience and the income from the concert, we will take care of it. That is, if you are willing to sign a contract with us.]

[It does make me worry since Korea and Japan are different. I wonder if everything I do will disappoint my fans.]

Producer Akabashi interjected.

[Why do you think I brought you here? How many times do I have to say that there are good people here?]

[But even you only saw him when you planned for the music recording.]

This time, it was President Lee HyunJi.

[You're referring to Team Leader Lee KangYoon. Team Leader Lee is our pride. I can promise you satisfaction in your concert.]

[Satisfaction, you say.]

Oda hesitated. However, both Producer Akabashi next to him, and President Lee HyunJi in front of him seemed to believe in this man called KangYoon. He became curious about him now.

[Looks like I will decide after meeting this person.]

To strike the iron while it was hot, Oda requested a meeting with this KangYoon, but President Lee HyunJi shook her head.

[It will be difficult right now. He's currently outside due to a concert. I will tell him to contact you when he comes back later.]

[What concert is it?]

Oda looked as though he would go there immediately. However, his expression darkened after seeing President Lee HyunJi hesitate. After a while, she told him that he was working on a breakdancing concert that will take place in Bucheon Art Center, and he stood up immediately.

[Book it.]

[What?]

[Let's go and see – how amazing this guy really is]

Producer Akabashi was dumbfounded at his friend Oda's quick-to-action.

The preparation for the concert progressed smoothly.

The new act, 'Puppeteering', was also going well as well. Unlike the start, JooAh now had to prepare two pieces, but she was satisfied to learn breakdancing. Her personality acted as a mood maker. Since she wasn't picky about capable people, there were no problems here.

While everyone was busy preparing for the concert, KangYoon was taking a phone call.

– The permission to use the Large Hall has been granted. Congratulations.

“Understood. Thanks for your cooperation.”

– Hahaha. Not at all. Both the center owner and the directors were praising your concert. And to top it off, there's JooAh. They

all said that this will be the best concert of the year, and have decided to watch. Oh, and speaking about that, do you have any....

“Don’t worry about that. I will give you the seats with the best view.”

“As expected. Thank you.”

KangYoon joyfully ended the call there. Some tickets to the Large Hall was nothing. The audience increased from 200 to 500, and now to 1,500.

KangYoon immediately went to the practice room and told everyone.

“Is that for real!?”

The one with the biggest reaction was Bang SanHyuk. He jumped around while grabbing other people’s hands like a little child. In the first place, he was expecting around 200 people, but now it was several times the scale.

“This is natural.”

Of course, JooAh was an exception. She was already immune to the series of miracles that KangYoon kept pulling off. It was just like how a girlfriend would act lukewarm if she received flowers on her birthday after receiving a handbag the year before.

“Now, the problem is how to sell all these tickets. To sell all 1,500 of these....”

That’s when their cheers died down. Just because they procured such a large space didn’t mean that everything was over. While everyone was worried, KangYoon was actually not worried at all.

“... I’ve asked professional internet websites, and also uploaded the street performances you did. We are also advertising pretty well through social networking services, and I’ve told JooAh’s fan café and posted on MG’s homepage that she would be appearing. We should be able to sell all fifteen-hundred tickets with ease.”

“.....”

Everyone was dumbfounded by KangYoon's quick actions. They always wondered what KangYoon was doing in the office with all that paperwork, and they didn't imagine that it was related to this. Their remaining doubts about him were all erased now.

But this wasn't the end.

“When I looked at the contents, I found out that we needed some equipment like neon lights, So I ordered most of the things we could rent with our current budget. The tickets, the equipment, and the contents are done.... Is there anything else you need?”

“.....”

Now, they were beyond dumbfounded and were shocked. Even Kim DoMin, who stayed next to KangYoon for the longest time out of all of them, was in the same situation. They only wondered when KangYoon had taken care of such big matters.

‘Why are they so surprised?’

Only JooAh, who knew him well, clicked her tongue.

“Everyone, applaud the team leader!”

Along with Bang SanHyuk's shout, everyone started clapping loudly. KangYoon, who was actually quite upset about how they treated him before, felt good and smiled.

Practice resumed, and the team started sweating again. At that time, KangYoon headed to the Large Hall of Bucheon Art Center. He had to talk with the professionals there about how to set up the lights and other equipment.

“Hello.”

KangYoon greeted them politely and started working properly. From the light director to the sound director, and the special effects director, everyone said their thoughts to KangYoon and they worked on the designs.

“The floor is slippery, so I think we have to minimize using the dry ice machine. If something goes wrong, they might be injured.”

“The smoke from the fog machine rises upwards. You won’t be able to produce the desired effect on this piece.”

At KangYoon’s words, the special effects director turned stern. KangYoon also agreed with those words.

“Why don’t we go with something else instead? We must emphasize the dancing, so we’ll go with something simple rather than something fancy.”

“Understood. Then should we go with lasers instead of smoke effects?”

“That sounds good. I’d love to see pillars of fire, but I guess that won’t happen, right?”

“Hahaha, you’ll get beaten by the owner.”

KangYoon progressed his work even while having some joking banter with the special effects director.

The important element in lighting was that no light could leak from the outside. KangYoon knew well that, due to the characteristics of the art center, light usually wouldn’t leak in, but he still turned off all the lights and observed whether any light was leaking in.

Working with the three of them, time went by in a flash.

“Thank you for your work.”

After a light drinking session with the directors, KangYoon separated from them. Since they had already come to a negotiation, they would be able to set up the stage and get ready for the rehearsal.

When he got on the train home, fatigue overcame his body. KangYoon leaned on the wall and dozed off.

His day passed by like that.

“Sheesh, why did I forget my wallet....”

Having returned from school, HeeYoon grumbled while throwing her shoes off in frustration at the door. (T/N: No shoes allowed indoors in Korea (and Japan)) She forgot her wallet on her day of dialysis.... So, she had to make a roundabout trip to her house.

She was about to take the wallet she left on top of the table when she found a letter on the postbox. It didn't look ordinary and was even written in English.

‘What is this? Is this for my brother?’

The receivers' names were “LEE KANGYOON and LEE HEEYOON”. Since her name was on it, she picked it up. She ripped it open to read it, but she frowned immediately.

‘It's all in English?’

The letter paper was luxurious and was even rimmed in gold, and it was all written in English. In the end, she put the letter in her bag and headed to the hospital.

As always, HeeYoon had a light consultation session with the doctor and started her dialysis. Although she became fatigued after the dialysis, it seemed that her body was getting better, as now she was capable of doing everyday things even after the dialysis. Of course, it was difficult to do something that strained her muscles, but the doctors were surprised to see her recovery.

While the machine was at work, HeeYoon took out the letter to see if she could read anything off it.

‘What does that mean?’

She could read ‘Hello’, no problem. However, the rest were the problem. The ‘grammar’ she learned at school was all useless. The sentence structures that her English teacher talked about all the

time seemed to have no relation at all to this letter.

“Hm? What’s up with that letter?”

But a young intern doctor seemed to be interested in her letter and approached her. He read through the letter a little bit before translating it fluently.

“Dear Mr. KangYoon, Ms. HeeYoon. Thank you for your patronage at our XX hospital. Regarding the kidney transplant we had discussed last time.....”

“Wait, kidney transplant!?”

(T/N: I don’t see a ‘Hello’ anywhere... And why is this a physical letter and not an e-mail)

Shouted HeeYoon in surprise. She was so loud that it rang out across the quiet hospital room. HeeYoon asked again in a small voice in embarrassment.

“Wh..... what does it say about the kidney.”

“Can you give it to me for a sec?”

After receiving the letter from HeeYoon, the intern doctor started interpreting the letter. The contents were that HeeYoon’s turn for the kidney transplant was here and that she should come to the US as soon as possible. The specific details would be given later.

“.....”

“Don’t worry. I’ll keep it a secret for you.”

The intern doctor gave the dumbfounded HeeYoon back the letter and started going around the wards again. He also didn’t forget to say that he would keep it a secret for her.

Left alone, HeeYoon grabbed her thumping chest.

‘A transplant...?’

Normal, becoming normal again? Could She live just like the

others of her age?

HeeYoon's chest started thumping rapidly.

Saturday, May 16th.

D-day.

Large Hall, Bucheon Art Center.

People started gathering 2 hours before the designated 5 p.m., at 3 p.m. From young students to JooAh's fans with posters, even middle-aged men could be seen as well.

'Not bad.'

KangYoon walked around the lobby and analyzed the audience. He was worried that the audience was only comprised of JooAh's fans or teenagers, but that did not happen. His marketing strategy – advertising across multiple media – was effective.

“There there there! You should....”

Inside the yet-to-open hall, the team was undergoing a dress rehearsal with Bang SanHyuk. The team was dressed in their costumes as well and did a run-through of all the pieces they were doing today. They also checked if the floor was too slippery or not, or whether the lights were too bright or not as they practiced.

And now, there are 40 minutes before it begins.

People started entering. The audience immediately filled the seats. Behind the closed curtains on the stage, the team members of Battlemonsters did a final round of practice.

“Fuu....”

JooAh was also at the rehearsal. Although she only appeared in two of the pieces, she still did her best. She had to put on a mask and had to be in perfect sync with the rest of the breakdancing crew, so the pressure on her was very high.

The final rehearsal was over, and the stage was cleaned as well.

“I heard JooAh was appearing today.”

“Wow, they must have spent a lot of money on this. But I still like DoMin-oppa more.”

“JooAh for me....”

People had their own expectations of this concert as they sat down. Some of them even brought posters and glowing sticks.

While the audience was laughing and chatting, the time for the performance arrived.

-Ten.

A deep voice of a man came out from the voice. The chatting fans all looked around to see what was happening.

-Nine.

The lights darkened slightly. People realized that the performance was going to begin soon.

-Eight.

People started shouting along. Even though there were no signs anywhere, everyone's reactions were amazing.

Like that, the numbers kept decreasing.

5, 4, 3, 2..., 1. The curtains slowly rose and the lights on the audience's seats darkened.

And zero.

All lights turned off and the spotlight suddenly shone the center of the stage. And along with a dun-dun sound, a trio's dance began. It started off with just rhythmical beats, but then eventually other sounds joined in as well and it burst out with a loud cymbal crash. With that, all the lights turned on and a man did a back handstand and grabbed everyone's attention.

“Kyaaaaaaah~~~!!”

Along with the cheers that resounded across the hall,
Battlemonsters opened their stage.

Chapter 77. In a Widening Stage! (4)

In a radio studio. The lights under ‘Broadcasting’ was currently red.

Jung MinAh was in this place. This programme named ‘Starry Road’ was aimed at young audiences. Next to her was the leader of DiaTeen, Kang SeGyung.

The main emcee, Kim HyoJin, asked a lot of things from Jung MinAh.

“...So even such things can happen at school. You must have had it hard.”

“Miss MinAh. You go to school too, right?”

“yes. If I don’t have a schedule, then I always do. That’s why it’s so....”

The fact that Kim HyoJin’s body was facing more towards Jung MinAh showed the reputation of the two girls. However, Kang SeGyung was no easy girl. She put a lot of effort in to join the conversation and showed a humorous side as well. Thanks to that, Jung MinAh couldn’t relax during these past two hours.

Like that, time passed and the programme finished.

“Thank you for your work.”

As she had learned from KangYoon, she politely greeted the staff.

“You too, Miss MinAh. You’re always so pretty.”

“Thank you very much.”

Jung MinAh left the studio with a smile. Kang SeGyung followed suit.

“...You’re good, MinAh.”

“What’s good?”

“Just, everything. You aren’t the leader for nothing.”

Jung MinAh and Kang SeGyung had a conversation. 22 years old, although Kang SeGyung had debuted later than her, Jung MinAh still respected her. Though, that didn't mean she liked her....

“You too, unni.”

“Nah, I'm still ways off from catching you, MinAh-seonbae. Then see you later.”

“Yes.”

The two ended their conversation with smiles on their faces, but there was a wall between them. Jung MinAh could feel better than anyone that the members of DiaTeen were wary against them and were trying to rise using them as the foothold.

“I think I meet them in everything I do.”

Manager Kim JiHyun clicked her tongue while watching Kang SeGyung walking away.

“It can't be helped. Rivals are supposed to compete against each other. But anyway, do you know what KangYoon-ahjussi is up to?”

“Do you know that you asked that 2 hours ago?”

“I'm just curious.”

Manager Kim JiHyun clicked her tongue.

Jung MinAh's wish for KangYoon was now well known to everyone.

Large Hall of Bucheon Art Center. A fancy breakdancing performance was currently taking place.

The dancing by the Battlemonsters didn't just grab the audience with fancy techniques alone. Even their light movements were like violent waves, and the glimpse of abs and muscles on the arms caught the attention of the female audience in the front rows. The

large screen installed on the right of the stage also showed their figure. The audience on the 2nd floor was very passionate in their cheers as well.

One team member, Jeon SeungJin, threw his hat into the audience before bowing down like a gentleman's greeting. His silent gesture triggered the audience to applaud and the lights on the stage slowly turned off.

[There's a breakdancing concert of such level in Korea?]

Oda, who was currently watching the performances in the front rows surrounded by girl fans, could not take his eyes off the marvelous breakdancing performances. The lights, sounds, and even the progression of the performances were very much to his liking.

[A picture speaks a thousand words. Well, I guess it's a stage in this case. But anyway, that guy is really amazing.]

Even Producer Akabashi, who heard about KangYoon to the death from JooAh, could not hide his surprise while looking at the real deal. In his and Oda's minds, they were picturing the busy movements of the staff behind the stage.

While they were picturing such scenes, a mask appeared in the pitch-black darkness of the stage. Following that, some threads and a pair of white gloves appeared. In the darkness, they danced like pendulums before dragging out another mask from the floor.

[Whoa.... What is this now?]

Producer Akabashi widened his eyes. It was like watching some avant-garde art. A couple of hands and a couple of masks were dancing attune to the piano instrumentals. Everyone started being absorbed by their movements.

[That's one hell of a mood....]

The stage started getting brighter. As the lights turned on, the figure behind the mask showed itself. The figure was being

manipulated by another masked figure and was showing the suffering of being controlled by a dance. Numerous figures around that central figure manipulated the central figure, and the central figure showed suffering. The marvelous dancing and the emphasized dancing was enough to make the audience very absorbed.

The rhythm sped up and the mood heightened. Psychedelic lights flashed, and the dances started becoming more violent as well. The one manipulated struggled to escape control but was bound by threads. The snappy dancing and the flashing lights on top of accelerating bass rhythm was enough to make the audience clench their fists in nervousness. However, the one being controlled eventually collapsed onto the ground in confusion. Along with that, the surroundings darkened again.

However, it seemed the figure's efforts had paid off.

The threads manipulating the central figure seemed to have snapped off, as that figure stood up as the lights turned back on. Along with the lights, the figure creakily moved its body like a broken puppet. However, once the figure confirmed that the threads were gone, it regained its smooth movements. Along with glee, the mask on the figure's face was also thrown off.

Like that, a piece was fini-

“It.... It's JooAh!”

Since all the figures on the stage were completely clad in black, the people did not realize that at all. Although they knew that she would be appearing, they never imagined that she would be appearing in such a form. People cheered at the unexpected appearance.

And as to reply to those cheers, the music changed for the brighter, and all members of Battlemonsters threw away their masks and ran up front.

“WHOAAAAA!!!”

“JOOAH, JOOAH!”

As though to blow away the dark mood the moment before, the Large Hall was filled with cheers and passionate cries.

‘That’s one done.’

Behind the stage, KangYoon was heaving a sigh of relief after seeing the scene where white light danced around. The white light became more beautiful as JooAh threw her mask away, but he was slightly disappointed that the influence of that light didn’t continue until the end.

JooAh did another piece in succession and exited the stage. Seeing her in a completely different form, the fans were all erupting in cheers. This would become a hot issue on the internet. Also, this would become a huge profit for JooAh in the long run.

“Over there. Move the first pin slightly to the right.”

The staging room was a war zone. The lights engineer ordered the pin light manager, and people in charge of sound and special effects were all very busy in their work as well.

Since one big issue was finished, KangYoon headed to the back of the stage while being careful not to disturb them.

“Well done.”

“Fuah.”

Behind the stage, JooAh was literally lying on the ground while sweating from all over her body. This was quite rare for her, who had high stamina.

“Was I okay?”

KangYoon wordlessly put a thumbs up.

“Heh, I knew it. I’m awesome, aren’t I?”

“There you go again with your boasting.”

“What? Sheesh, you really are the only one that treats me like this. Heh, but I feel good today, so I forgive you.”

JooAh covered her exposed stomach and stood up slowly. She wiped her sweat with the towel KangYoon handed her and left the waiting room. The two headed to the audience seats to watch the remaining performances.

“Really. World class sure is different.”

KangYoon was very satisfied with JooAh’s attitude. Although it wasn’t easy to impress her, she definitely did acknowledge this team. Even in KangYoon’s eyes, their level was beyond top-notch.

“Thanks for calling me here.”

“It’s nothing new.”

“It’s usually not easy since those kinds of people are all about pride. I got to experience such a thing thanks to you. Thanks.”

KangYoon smiled, thinking that this was a good result.

The concert was now nearing its end. JooAh also went back to the stage saying that she had to be there for the final closing. On the stage, Bang SanHyuk and the others were showing off their skills one by one and the audience applauded. Finally, JooAh showed off a skill called ‘Nike’, and the cheers intensified.

Like that, the concert by Battlemonsters was finished successfully.

“Ho, it’s already the time for the first quarter’s audit season?”

Chairman Won JinMoon received a series of paperwork from Director Kim JinHo. On the paper, the title ‘MG Entertainment audit for Q1’.

“Yes. The teams under Director Moon GwangShik and Director

Yoo GyungTae have finished theirs.”

“How were the results? Last time, there were parts where the budget on-paper and the actual budget did not match.”

“There was an error in the process. I have investigated what was happening, and a vice-head of a department tampered with it.”

“Really?”

Chairman Won JinMoon narrowed his eyes. The director talked about the details written on the documents and also handed in some papers for deduction in pay and a job suspension for the ones responsible. Chairman Won JinMoon nodded and signed the papers.

“Chairman. I have a question.”

“Go ahead.”

“About the General Music Team under President Lee HyunJi.”

“Is there a problem?”

Chairman Won JinMoon asked in wonder. Then, the director heaved a deep breath before carefully mentioning this topic.

“The entirety of the General Music Team is the concert team. As you know, it’s also the team that Team Leader Lee KangYoon is in charge of, and is producing results in.”

“It is indeed. What is it that you want to say?”

Chairman Won JinMoon asked for his intentions. Director Kim JinHo seemed to hesitate a little before seeming to have come to a decision and said it directly.

“Until now, the teams under Team Leader Lee KangYoon have not been audited even once. That is, under your specific orders, Chairman.”

“Yes. I did order that. Is there a problem with it?”

“Team Leader Lee KangYoon is definitely capable. He is indeed

worthy of your consideration. But I think that this will be unfair to the other teams if this keeps going on.”

“Fairness, fairness, you say....”

This definitely was not wrong. Just because the achievements received every quarter were good, ‘continuing’ to not receive audits was definitely not a good thing.

“This time around, there’s a company-wide audit. And here comes my point. I wonder if we can do an audit this time at this opportunity.”

“Hmm....”

Chairman Won JinMoon fell into contemplation. KangYoon’s team was currently just growing wings. However, as the chairman, he also had to consider the equity of the company. On one side, he was also slightly wary since the team was going on a slightly different ‘route’ from what the company strived for.

After a long period of contemplation, he opened his mouth.

“The breakdancing concert will be over soon, so you can carry it out then. Do it on a small scale. So that there won’t be anything about it. Do you get what I mean?”

“Understood, sir.”

Director Kim JinHo bid goodbye to the chairman and left the chairman’s office.

‘Finally....’

Director Kim JinHo thought back to the past when he came up with the project to send JooAh to Japan, but was rejected. He was the first one to think that up in the company, but the one who succeeded in the project was some random guy from the outside – KangYoon.

Thinking about that time, Director Kim JinHo gritted his teeth.

During the past few years, a new ‘word’ was coined in Hongdae (Hongik university district).

Hongdae goddess!

Originally, indie bands in Hongdae were very rare and were treated like precious guests. This being the case, the original term was ‘Hongdae girl singer’. But with the looks to top it off, the ‘girl singer’ changed to ‘goddess’. Currently, there were quite a few ‘goddesses’ in Hongdae....

“... and I’m one of them?”

Lee HyunAh almost burst out laughing after hearing Kim JinDae say that. Then, Jung ChanGyu also chimed in.

“Well. They would never say that if they saw you picking your nose during practice.”

“When did I pick my nose? Did you see? Huh?”

“I did, that’s why I’m saying it.”

“Bullsh*t!”

Lee HyunAh attacked Jung ChanGyu. But he had already hidden behind Lee ChaHee. When the two growled, Lee ChaHee slowly stood up from her seat and tried to mediate.

“It’s because we became more popular after our stage last time. If you become the Hongdae goddess, it will be better for our popularity. And you, ChanGyu. You shouldn’t mention picking noses in front of ladies.”

“...Tch.”

The two eventually just grumbled and ended on that note. After it became a bit quieter, she sat back down again and started replacing the strings on her bass guitar.

Kim JinDae continued to speak.

“Since she’s the Hongdae goddess now, more people will come to

our performance, right?”

“Ah, that gives me the shivers....”

Although KangYoon almost never came to the company and went to Battlemonsters’ studio directly in Onsu-dong recently due to work, it was now time to go back.

Having come to the company, KangYoon organized a few documents in ready for reporting. He was very excited to tell that the work was a success and to give bonuses out to the employees.

But along with a knock, a few company employees entered his office.

“What is it?”

The fact that they entered without waiting for a reply, and their arrogant expressions made KangYoon wary of them. They showed him their company employer’s cards and approached KangYoon.

“We are from the audit team.”

“The audit team?”

KangYoon finally remembered that it was the season for audits for the 1st quarter.

“Oh, it’s the audit season.”

KangYoon took out the documents he had prepared all the time. A USB, paperwork, external hard drives – the amount of materials KangYoon took out was immense. Even though Chairman Won JinMoon put an exception on him, he thought that something may happen. And just as he had thought, such a thing happened today.

When KangYoon obediently complied and gave them the materials, they were confused instead.

“Isn’t there more?”

“Sorry?”

“Please give us the papers regarding the concert team you did in the past.”

KangYoon found this absurd. This was before the first quarter of this year. Why were they doing this now?

“Isn’t this the audit for the 1st quarter? And moreover, I’m in charge of the general music team and not the concert team.”

“I apologize, but we are only moving as we were ordered to.”

The man in the suit was firm in his actions.

“Please wait a moment.”

KangYoon didn’t try to force this. This kind of problem was supposed to be taken care of by someone higher than him. He took out papers regarding last year’s concert team along with an external hard drive. They were literally the important documents of the concert team.

“Are there any more?”

Even after taking out everything, they tried to force their way into KangYoon’s drawers. KangYoon finally exploded at their actions.

“From the concert team, Eddios, and even JooAh’s entrance to Japan – everything’s there. What more do you need from my department? Is there something lacking? What the hell do you think you are doing?”

“.....”

“Is this how the audit team works?”

“We are only following orders....”

“I don’t care about those orders. Is rummaging through other people’s offices how your work, audit team?”

The audit team had nothing to say about that. Although they sometimes looked through offices under permission, this place was

definitely not one of them. Moreover, they couldn't say anything since KangYoon didn't leave anything out.

“I gave you everything so please return. I will not sit by in this matter.”

“Well, then....”

The staff of the audit team left the office rather toned down. Even they could not force KangYoon since he received the complete faith from the chairman with his achievements alone.

KangYoon was angry himself. No matter how he thought about it, it didn't make sense to him that those people were trying to rummage through his office.

‘Fuu....’

But he still had to calm down. After settling down, KangYoon took the papers required to report and headed to the chairman's office.

Chapter 78: Trigger (1)

“JooAh’s performance fee is a little bit of a pity, but the overall concert is very satisfactory. Well done.”

Chairman Won JinMoon signed at the end of KangYoon’s report in satisfaction. He especially highly evaluated the fact that the scale became bigger and the fame of his company in that field became larger.

“At this rate, a large-scale concert will be no problem too. Summer’s too early..., so let’s try to do one around autumn or winter.”

Chairman Won JinMoon jumped his shoulders in excitement.

‘Do I talk about it, or not?’

KangYoon hesitated whether he should speak about his troubles with the audit team or not. If something went wrong, he might be a petty guy who reported trivial things. In the end, he decided not to, even though the words were right in his mouth.

“Understood. I think that autumn will be too early, and winter will be good. I think an end-of-year concert would be good.”

“An end-of-year concert. That sounds good. I look forward to that time.”

KangYoon then took his leave.

“Well, then! Let’s do our best for today! Today’s overtime!”

Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung of the audit team encouraged his subordinates and started looking through the documents on the table. Chief Kang DongHyung sighed deeply and shook his head at those words.

“Just when I thought it was all over....”

The sudden increase in workflow made the employees sigh. However, the assistant director was full of spirits.

“It’s the hottest topic of the company, the general music team. The director said that we’ll get a special promotion if we do this well, so let’s do this.”

“Yes!”

Hearing the words ‘special promotion’, their eyes lit up. A promotion was a sweet temptation to workers who had to take care of their family. Everyone started working with their eyes on fire.

Like that, 1 hour, 2 hours....

Business hours were over, and now they were doing overtime.

“How the hell is it so clean!”

The skies had already turned dark.

In the end, the most impatient of the team, Chief Min DooJin, ended up shouting out loud. The budget passed through the board of directors meeting, and the budget usage that KangYoon showed them matched completely, even down to the cent. Normally, there would be small errors, but he was really confused.

“Run the program again.”

Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung frowned, but Chief Min DooJin said that this was no good and shook his head.

“It’s the fifth time already. This guy’s a complete freak.”

“Huh... like this, I don’t have anything to say to the director....”

“What was that?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung was currently looking at matters related to Eddios. He judged that there would be many things to scoop out since the budget was huge for this project. However, there was not even a small error in the allocated budget

and budget usage from the very beginning – the selection of members – and even the remaining budget was the same.

“This guy is too freakish.”

Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung clicked his tongue. Meanwhile, Chief Kang DongHyung looked at the documents and added.

“There’s nothing wrong with Sedy’s work either. They all match.”

“JooAh’s Japan one?”

“No need to say. We ran that the first time.”

Perhaps it was manipulated – they thought and checked the date last edited, but they were all written in the past. There was no need to suspect about manipulation.

“Assistant Director, there’s nothing more.”

“.....”

Like what Chief Kang DongHyung said, there was really nothing left to audit. Even though the employees in the entire department clung onto this for the whole day, they could not find any traces of what they could use. They even rummaged through to see if there were any missing receipts, but there was not the tiniest of error.

“...You can go home.”

“And you?”

“I’ll see to it a little more.”

Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung eventually allowed everyone to leave work. However, he even pulled off his necktie and started going through the documents again.

“Let’s see who wins!”

And his lonely war began.

“...F*ck.”

The day was already brightening, but Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung did not take his eyes off the documents. These documents were meticulous to the character. However, he couldn't back out here.

“Goddammit!”

However, even though he had re-checked tens of times throughout the night, the results did not change. In the end, he sighed and called the one responsible for this matter, Director Kim JinHo.

– There should be one. Find it. No matter what you have to do.

“The entire department could not find it. I think we should stop here....”

Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung indirectly asked him to give up. However, the highest authority of the audit team did not change his order. It wouldn't be surprising if he backed out right now, but his attitude did not change at all.

– If there isn't one, make one.

“What?”

– It's done by humans anyway. Try to do something.

The phone then beeped out. Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung felt gloomy. He felt dark since he didn't know what to do with these flawless data. However, an employee's fate was to do what he was ordered.

‘Dammit. Let's just do it....’

Assistant Director Yeo JinHyung resolved himself. In front of his eyes was materials related to Eddios.

“...Understood. I will contact you back after setting up a

schedule.”

– The donor also cannot wait long. Organs aren’t something that can wait a long period of time. You need to come as soon as possible.

“Understood.”

The phone call he got on his way to work made KangYoon’s heart complicated. Ever since a few days ago, when he was told by HeeYoon that they got a letter from America, he was preparing for that, but now that he received a phone call, his mind was complex. He was too worried to send HeeYoon by herself, but for him to go as well, he felt that it wasn’t the right time yet.

KangYoon went to work with his mind in disarray. However, he had a guest in his office – it was President Lee HyunJi.

“President?”

“Have a seat.”

She led KangYoon to sit on the sofa. KangYoon wondered what was up from the morning.

“There’s a not-so-good rumor floating around the company.”

“A not-so-good rumor? Did something happen?”

“The rumor is that..... you, Team Leader Lee, embezzled company funds.”

“WHAT?”

KangYoon was flabbergasted. Embezzlement? This was a bolt from the blue for him.

“I don’t have a reason to do so, though.”

“Right? I’m looking for the source of these rumors, so please calm down even if you receive unpleasant glares today.”

“Whoa....”

After President Lee HyunJi left, KangYoon started working

again. However, he felt very chaotic after the word ‘embezzlement was mentioned’. He handed over everything to the audit team after checking that everything matched down to the cent, and now he was accused of embezzling? This did not make sense no matter how he thought about it.

‘There’s something wrong with this.’

KangYoon opened the documents again. They were copies of the files that he handed over to the audit team. He went through each of them while comparing them to the allocated budget by the directors meeting, but he did not know where this embezzlement came from.

Since there were so many materials, it took him the entire day to check through. It was a rare on-time leave. When he went to the lobby, the employees greeted him. However, they weren’t as friendly as before.

‘Looks like the rumors spread a lot.’

His insides boiled when he noticed that everyone around him changed slightly. He would hate to be suspected by them.

Fortunately, his time for justice was quickly created. An urgent directors meeting took place 2 days later.

When KangYoon was notified and went to the meeting room, the directors were all waiting for him.

“It is very unfortunate that we are having this meeting due to an unfortunate matter, but I wish that we can correct this and head to the right way....”

Along with Director Moon GwangShik’s slightly long intro, the board meeting began. Today’s topic was about KangYoon’s embezzlement. The directors’ opinion was that they should have conducted a hearing, but due to President Lee HyunJi’s objection and Chairman Won JinMoon’s rejection, the format was changed to a directors meeting.

KangYoon walked up to the center. When KangYoon was ready, Director Kim JinHo started questioning him.

“Personally, it’s very unfortunate to hear about the bad rumors surrounding Team Leader Lee during the past few days. I think the rumors are just rumors but have prepared this place since there were a few things I should ask. Is it alright if I ask some questions?”

“Please, go ahead.”

“I will not ask about matters related to your work with Eddios. Team Leader Lee, the budget allocated when selecting the members....”

Director Kim JinHo handed the secretary in charge of this meeting the USB. It was a PPT. The secretary put the PPT onto the screen. Then, the budget allocation from the directors meeting and the budget usage by KangYoon came up on the screen.

‘What the hell?’

KangYoon widened his eyes. The comparison was not from the materials he gave the audit team.

“Team Leader Lee. The final budget you’ve used and left behind seems to lack a little compared to the budget we’ve allocated. Can I ask where the remaining funds have gone?”

“.....”

“Very well then. You can answer all the questions at the end, so let’s go to the next one.”

Director Kim JinHo focused on the budget about Eddios. He especially clung on to the fact that the budget allocated from the company and the budget used for individual practice did not match. He even dragged Eddios’ dorm matter and asked whether they got a dormitory despite being trainees because of the budget allocation.

The directors whispered to each other. There was no audit until now, and there was a punk in the budget. Then where were the remaining ones? Their eyes were suspecting KangYoon.

KangYoon felt absurd. The materials shown on screen were completely different from what he gave.

‘Did I work until now to be treated like this?’

He felt pathetic about himself standing here. The directors all tried to say something to KangYoon, and the one at the vanguard was glaring at him with sharp eyes. KangYoon felt both sad and angry, but still cool-headedly calmed himself down.

“First, I will talk about the budget in the selection of Eddios’ members.”

KangYoon gestured the secretary and handed over a USB. It was yet another PPT file. The same material appeared on screen when the secretary opened it. However, the numbers on this file were different from the previous one.

“What is this.”

“This is the budget allocation that I have handed over to the audit team.”

“Wait, then do you mean to say that you were writing double accounts?”

KangYoon was almost about to explode at Director Kim JinHo’s words but pressed his head down.

“...The materials I have shown here are the materials I have reported to the chairman. If you bring it here right now, they will match.”

Chairman Won JinMoon immediately ordered the secretary to copy the materials. A while later, the secretary brought back the files on a USB drive and put it up on the screen. As KangYoon head said, it matched with what KangYoon head shown. While everyone

was whispering again, KangYoon went a step further.

“There is no reason for me to manipulate the materials I have reported to the chairman. If there’s anything wrong, shouldn’t it be the audit team?”

“What was that!? Are you accusing-“

“Please check the dates. All files in the company intranet have their dates last edited recorded on to the system.”

As KangYoon had said, the secretary checked the original file.

“It was 3 days ago.”

KangYoon continued.

“3 days ago, I no longer possessed that file. The audit team took all my files, so I couldn’t even touch it anymore. However, the date last edited was 3 days ago. I did not manipulate anything, nor do I need to. Do I still need to be suspected like this?”

“.....”

The meeting room fell into silence. Actually, the date last edited usually wasn’t checked. But now that they did, no one could say anything about KangYoon anymore. KangYoon added a few more things.

“I do not know why the materials I handed over was changed like that. However, since an altered file is here in the board meeting, I feel that the origins of the file should be investigated first. I conclude my words here.”

Everyone lost their words at KangYoon’s words. This was completely flawless.

‘That was too much.’

‘He shouldn’t have done that.’

Director Kim JinHo also felt those gazes. The source of this misfortune came from the fact that he unconditionally accepted

what the audit team assistant director ‘found’ from the file.

“...Director Kim. What is happening here?”

Chairman Won JinMoon was enraged. He glared at Director Kim JinHo with fiery eyes.

“It’s.... So, this....”

“I will not sit by this matter. Let’s end it here today. There’s nothing to see anymore.”

Chairman Won JinMoon kicked the door open and exited the meeting room. The remaining directors could not even move under the pressure.

‘Hah....’

Unlike usual, KangYoon also left the meeting room earlier than the directors. Although he escaped framing, he didn’t feel good at all.

“Today’s cigar doesn’t taste good at all.”

KangYoon violently stepped on the cigarette. Although it was usually bitter, it felt even more so today.

‘Just what have I been doing until now....’

When KangYoon couldn’t hide his feelings, someone approached him. When he turned around, he saw President Lee HyunJi.

“President.”

“Looks like I interrupted you.”

“Not at all.”

President Lee HyunJi did not smoke. Instead, she took out a gum and started chewing it. She handed one to KangYoon as well and he accepted.

“So, it was something that the audit team assistant director did

on his own.”

“.....”

“We will take measures. Both to that Assistant Director Yeo and to Director Kim JinHo.”

However, KangYoon’s expression was not bright at all. Although they were punished, he didn’t feel any good.

“As someone who represents the company, I can only apologize. I am very sorry.”

“.....”

President Lee HyunJi even lowered her head. Normally, KangYoon would have said that it was alright and just moved past it, but this time, he fell silent.

“Go.”

“Sorry?”

KangYoon reacted to a word that President Lee HyunJi had said.

“Do you mean... to leave the company?”

“In the future, the fight between me and the board of directors will become even fiercer. If you stay here, it’s obvious that such things would happen again. Honestly, I wish that you’d stay... but if you stay here anymore, we won’t drag you down, but we may even end up cutting your ankle.”

“.....”

KangYoon felt even more chaotic after hearing those words.

“Team Leader Lee, no, Mr. Lee KangYoon – You are definitely capable. You have the eyes to see talent, songs, and even the trends. This is not something that anybody has. It’s also the reason why the chairman likes you a lot.”

“.....”

“With that much skills, you might be better off standing alone.

Like you said last time.”

She seemed to have finished her words as she left the roof while her hair fluttered in the wind.

“...Standing alone, you say....”

This was a difficult matter. In his contemplation, KangYoon took out another cigar.

Chapter 79: Trigger (2)

HeeYoon returned home early after cram school. KangYoon said that there was something important to talk about.

“Oppa.”

“You’re home?”

When HeeYoon went through the front door, KangYoon was making dinner. A nice array of food, including meat and fried chicken, were on the table.

“I’ll do it.”

“It’s fine.”

KangYoon refused her, but HeeYoon still did it anyway. She didn’t feel good about her brother doing the meals. She knew clearly how much work he was doing to support her, so she did not want to make him do work at home as well.

“I said it really is fine....”

In the end, KangYoon was forced to the table. HeeYoon was firm in this matter.

After their dinner was ready, the two siblings sat across each other. The two started eating joyfully.

“Oppa, you have something to talk about?”

“.....”

Seeing KangYoon hesitate, HeeYoon noticed that KangYoon had something to say. She felt a strange aura about her brother. A sister was a sister alright.

KangYoon thought for a moment before going into the topic.

“HeeYoon.”

“What is it? Is it something hard to talk about?”

“You know, the thing we talked about last time.”

HeeYoon also momentarily paused. This was about going to America. HeeYoon focused.

“America... right?”

“In my opinion, I think it will be better to go there as soon as possible.”

In her heart, HeeYoon had already decided to go to America. She especially focused on the fact that she would not be a burden to KangYoon anymore once she regained her health and found her dreams. There was no reason to hesitate.

“When are we going? And how long are we going to be there for?”

“I think we’ll go there in 2 months. I’ll take care of the documents, and we’ll have to learn some English too. Is that fine with you?”

“I’m fine with it. In fact, I’m really delighted.”

Seeing his sister very clear on her intentions, KangYoon sighed in relief since one of his worries was solved. He was worried that she may want to remain here in Korea. Fortunately, nothing like that happened.

The problem lay elsewhere.

“What are you going to do? Your work is important, isn’t it?”

“I’m going to go after I clean up.”

“Oppa.”

HeeYoon shook her head. She was worried that KangYoon was giving up his work for her sake. She did not want to burden her brother.

“If it’s because of me, then don’t. I can stay alone by myself.”

“HeeYoon, it’s not just because of that.”

“Then what is it? If you are going to stop working just because of me, then I’ll... just not go.”

“I said it’s not like that.”

“Oppa, do you take me for an idiot?”

HeeYoon violently shook her head.

“I know better than anyone how much you like your work right now. What would I be if you stop working and go to America just because of me? Let’s just wait and....”

“HeeYoon!”

In the end, KangYoon shouted out loud. Then, HeeYoon became quiet. However, her eyes were still blazing.

Feeling that the atmosphere had calmed down somewhat, KangYoon started talking calmly again.

“Shouldn’t I prepare myself if I want to do my own work? That’s why we’re going.”

“Your own work? What do you mean?”

“Until now, I was an employee in a company. But now, I’ll be running the business myself.”

“Eh?”

HeeYoon became absent-minded. Running his own business? This was just as shocking as when JooAh suddenly invaded her school.

“Your business? You’re going to do a business?”

“I now have enough foundation and ties with other people. So, I’m thinking of doing my own work.”

“Haha....”

HeeYoon felt weird. She was surprised when her brother stopped being a manager and became a planner, but now he was going to run his own business.

However, as always, she believed in her brother.

“Wow, so it’s a business now? It’s my brother, so of course, you’ll do well, right?”

“Thanks. It’s not like I’m going to start right away. We have plenty of time, so I’m going to study as well while you heal.”

“Study? Study what?”

“Music. I also want to study stage planning as well.”

KangYoon remembered back to Samuel Johnson’s concert. The beautiful stage filled with bright golden light flashed in his mind. He could still clearly feel the stage filled with passionate golden light among the cheers of countless people.

He felt that he was still lacking if he wanted to create such a stage.

“Then I’m going to go to school with you?”

“You’re going to study too?”

“Of course. Once I get healthy, all your worries will be over.”

“Girlie.”

KangYoon patted HeeYoon’s head in delight. HeeYoon grumbled saying that her hair got messy, but KangYoon giggled, replying that he did that on purpose.

Like that, the night for the two siblings went by.

During the past couple days, MG Entertainment was very noisy within the company.

Once, it was noisy about the ‘success after success’ KangYoon’s embezzlement rumors, and next, it was that that rumor was due to corruption in the audit team, as well as a director, being directly involved in it. With such rumors going around, the employees were gossiping.

And today, KangYoon put the icing on the cake.

“...What is this, Team Leader Lee?”

When KangYoon put a white envelope on the table, Chairman Won JinMoon muttered in a very awkward voice.

“It’s my letter of resignation.”

“So.... It comes to this.”

“.....”

He sighed as though he had already expected this.

“You wouldn’t want to stay behind when you were framed for embezzlement. I understand you plenty.”

“Chairman, that’s....”

“Aah, it really isn’t easy to say that it’s a pity to see you leave. Haha....”

Chairman Won JinMoon didn’t hide his feelings. KangYoon had successfully put JooAh in Japan despite many obstacles. After that, he succeeded in numerous other projects and raised MG Entertainment, which was known for its specialty in idols, in the field of concert planning and general music business. He also single-handedly raised the general music team and showed its potential. At this rate, it was only a matter of time until the team became a separate department and eventually become its own company.

However, a trivial jealousy from a director had ruined everything. He should have prevented the competition between the board of directors and the president before it went too far.... He felt that it was his own fault.

Chairman Won JinMoon sighed deeply.

“You know. I do not have a history of clinging to someone who’s about to leave the company. But you, however, are different. Right now, I really need you. I really wish you would reconsider this.”

“I apologize, Chairman. Actually, I have another reason for this.”

“Another reason?”

KangYoon talked about his sister – the fact that she must go to America to receive an organ transplant, and that he wishes to cool his head and study a little more.

With things like this, Chairman Won JinMoon could do nothing.

“...Your sister, huh. That’s an awkward time.”

“I think this is the end of me here in MG. I could only come this far thanks to you, Chairman. I will not forget this.”

“That’s a pity. When are you planning to go to America?”

“In two months.”

“...Please finish up your work properly. Also, let’s have a meal before you go there.”

Since this was about his family as well, Chairman Won JinMoon no longer had an excuse to hold him here. He closed his eyes and gestured to him to leave.

Just as KangYoon left and passed by the secretary, “Director Kim JinHo. The chairman is looking for you.”

‘Looks like he’ll get thrashed badly. Well... you reap what you sow.’

Bypassing the secretary’s office, he shrugged his shoulders. Then, he headed to his next destination, the president’s office.

In her office, there were two guests along with the president herself. It was Producer Akabashi and Oda.

“Team Leader Lee. Welcome.”

[Hello?]

[Producer, Hello.]

KangYoon shook hands with Producer Akabashi, who he never

imagined seeing here. After last time, when he invited him and HeeYoon to a meal, they became very close. Producer Akabashi was also very grateful for KangYoon for giving him a clue to solve his business relationship with JooAh.

[This is Oda Futaba-san. He's a guitarist and.....]

Producer Akabashi introduced Oda to KangYoon. KangYoon greeted him as well and then heard about the reason they had come here.

[...The concert, you say?]

[I saw the breakdancing concert last time, and it was very impressive. The intro, the collaboration, and the final act was very powerful and caught the attention of the audience. I liked how you focused on the most important things.]

They were definitely here to talk about the concert. And just as he had expected, Oda wanted to request KangYoon to stage a concert in Korea.

He was thankful for Oda's words but had to shake his head.

[I am very sorry. It will be hard for me to help you.]

[Sorry?]

For Oda, this was a completely unexpected matter. He asked back.

[You haven't heard of my conditions yet.]

[I apologize, but I have decided to go to America due to my sister's affair. I think it will be very difficult.]

[Ah, the lady from last time.]

Producer Akabashi interrupted. KangYoon nodded his head.

[Yes. Due to an opportunity, my sister is about to receive an organ transplant. I am very sorry, but I will have to refuse.]

Oda seemed to be very disappointed as he sighed. Since it was

about his family, there were no compromises. He went left the office for a bit with Producer Akabashi, saying that he had to think about it. The office was left with KangYoon and President Lee HyunJi.

“So, you handed it in.”

“I did.”

“The chairman must have been very disappointed.”

“He called for Director Kim JinHo.”

“Looks like that guy would get thrashed. Such a foolish guy.”

President Lee HyunJi poured some tea for KangYoon.

“Thank you.”

“So our days together in the company are numbered. When are you going to America?”

“After I clean everything up, I am thinking about in two months.”

“That’s a pity. So, you’re going to study while you’re there?”

“Yes. I’m planning to cool my head for a year or so.”

“That’s good. You should properly learn everything that ChanYang-seonbae taught you too.”

Other than that, KangYoon talked about cleaning things up here and stood up from his seat. When KangYoon left, Producer Akabashi and Oda returned. President Lee HyunJi apologized to them and offered to introduce another concert planning company. Although it took a little time to persuade Oda, the matter was finished up well.

Recently, Eddios did not come to the company much. Due to various events and recordings for TV programmes, they would have a hard time even with body doubles.

Meanwhile, lightning struck on Jung MinAh.

“Wh.... What? He’s quitting!?”

“MinAh! Don’t open your eyes!”

While getting her eye makeup done, Jung MinAh reacted very sensitively to a huge piece of news. Thanks to that, the coordinator doing her eye makeup slipped her hand. Not caring about that, Jung MinAh turned around and nagged the one who said the news, Manager Han TaeHyung.

“What do you mean by that? Why would he quit?”

“You know about the embezzlement a few days ago, right?”

“Yes, that complete and utter nonsense... don’t tell me it’s real?”

Jung MinAh was really angry. KangYoon? Embezzlement? She started nagging Manager Han TaeHyung, saying that there’s no way her idol KangYoon, would do such things.

“There’s no way it’s true. Why would he do that in the first place?”

“Obviously. Anyway, why’s he resigning when he did nothing wrong? Just what is it? Isn’t the other side in the wrong?”

“Yes. For now, Director Kim JinHo is suspended from work for trying to frame the Team Leader of embezzlement, but.... I don’t know the details either.”

Manager Han TaeHyung didn’t know the details. Jung MinAh couldn’t hold it anymore and called KangYoon, but all she got was a robotic voice.

“I’m going to go there after this.”

“Go where?”

“Where else? The office, of course.”

After fixing her make-up, the recording began again. Although she felt nervous because of KangYoon, she was still a professional.

“Good! A little more to the left....”

After a messy round of following the photographer’s demands, the skies darkened.

When the photographer gave the okay after checking all the photos, the session ended with everyone greeting each other. Jung MinAh quickly bid them farewell and headed to the van.

‘He’s still here!’

From the outside of the company, she could see that KangYoon’s office was still lit. She didn’t even look back and ran to his office.

“Ahjussi!”

Jung MinAh burst through the door while panting.

“What the hell!?”

KangYoon, who was clearing things up, suddenly stood up in surprise due to the sudden entrance. However, he felt awkward after finding out that it was Jung MinAh.

“...At least, knock, would you?”

“Is that the problem right now?”

Usually, she would act cute or play pranks, but today was different. She started causing a mess right in front of KangYoon’s desk.

“You resigned? Why did you do that? Did something happen? Really? Really?”

“...One by one. okay?”

“Why so suddenly, why?”

“Calm down a little first.”

Jung MinAh sped up her speech in agitation. KangYoon first sat her down and gave her some tea to calm her down. She sat down on the sofa and sighed after some time.

“Phew....”

“Did you run all the way here?”

“Yes. I ran up from the ground floor.”

“That’s amazing. What’s up today? Aren’t you busy nowadays?”

“It’s....”

But now that KangYoon actually asked, she could not think of what to say. She just hated to see KangYoon quit. She just couldn’t express it.

KangYoon wondered while looking at her lips twitch.

“Didn’t you come here because you had something to say?”

“It’s.... uh.”

“Since you’re here, have some tea.”

KangYoon stood up from the sofa. Only when he cleared up his work properly could his successor succeed his work. He was busy and didn’t have time to confront her.

At that time, Jung MinAh abruptly stood up and shouted.

“Don’t go!”

“MinAh.”

“Who am I supposed to believe in once you aren’t here? Please don’t go!”

She shouted her lungs out. KangYoon ended up laughing.

“MinAh. What the heck does that mean?”

“I mean don’t go! sob sob!”

But her emotions seem to have overwhelmed her as she teared up before she collapsed onto the sofa and lowered her head. Her usual energy was nowhere to be seen. Once her tear glands burst, they burst like a waterfall.

“This... sheesh.”

KangYoon walked back and sat down next to her.

“Sob... sob...!!”

“There, there. Stop crying. You’re doing well, right now, aren’t you? Stop crying.”

“...Don’t.... go....”

Seeing Jung MinAh having difficulty saying those words while heaving, KangYoon felt both sorry and grateful. Until now, no one was this honest with him. He also felt quite emotional.

“...Thanks.”

“...*Sob... sob...*”

KangYoon hugged the girl who honestly showed her true self.

He felt bitter in one corner of his heart. Although he didn’t really take it to heart when seeing the others, he finally felt that he was actually leaving for real.

‘It really is bitter.’

Consoling Jung MinAh, KangYoon made a bitter smile.

Chapter 80: Trigger (3)

For a faster takeover of his work, KangYoon headed to his office during the weekend and finished up his work during the morning. In a special field of work like music coordination, he created a guideline and regarding concert-related work, he transferred the workload to the related departments.

“Phew, just a few more left now.”

KangYoon stretched his arms and stood up from his seat. When he looked outside, the sunlight was warm, and there were people in the streets. It was a fine weather for a picnic.

“Should I go home?”

There was only a little more left to the takeover, so it was no pressure. KangYoon gathered his stuff and walked down the stairs.

He was going down the staircase on the 3rd floor when he saw a girl in school uniform holding a guitar.

‘Oh yeah, it’s the regular audition day today. Is she here for the audition?’

Today was the regular audition that was held once a month. The girl in the uniform entered when her number was called. KangYoon headed to the large studio on the 3rd floor quietly since he found her quite curious – she was carrying a guitar when she came for an audition in MG.

– I want to embrace—your small shoulders—I lean—

From what he heard over the door, the girl had a considerable talent for singing. Her skills with the guitar weren’t bad either. It was quite rare to see a girl of her age singing while playing the guitar chords at the same time.

‘Not bad.’

White light could be seen from the girl. The pure white light

enveloped the studio. KangYoon thought that that was enough to get a pass from the judges.

However, the results were contrary to his expectations.

“Thanks for your performance. We’ll tell your results at a further date.”

The girl in the uniform said thank you before leaving after hearing the male producer in the middle. KangYoon immediately stepped out of the doorway. The girl passed by KangYoon and went to the lobby.

‘What?’

KangYoon was confused. That level of singing was definitely a passing grade. MG Entertainment usually gave a pass to the candidate on the spot if he or she made it. But they sent her off – she did not make it.

KangYoon became curious and went inside. When he went in, the producer and the composers were there. They all greeted KangYoon first. KangYoon also nodded his head to greet them back and asked them the reason.

“So, you saw her. She had a pretty good singing voice... but she doesn’t match the company.”

“The company, huh. I guess that’s true. MG Entertainment has its standards.”

“Yes. She was good in both singing and in playing the instrument, but we judged that her looks were not qualified to be a star.”

KangYoon said that he understood and headed to the lobby. They judged using the optimized standards of the company. There was nothing he could do to change that.

‘I would have given her a pass.’

However, in KangYoon’s own standards, it was hard to accept. If

he remained in the company, he would have considered taking her in. However, that was all useless now.

When he came to the lobby, he could see the girl.

‘She’s plain’.

She had a short hair, medium height, and thin make-up. It was an ordinary middle school girl that could be seen anywhere. Perhaps it was natural for MG Entertainment to not give her a pass since all they looked for was a doll-like face or unique aesthetic features. The relatively ‘special looking’ Lee SamSoon was also quite a beauty when makeup was applied.

‘If fate allows it, we’ll meet again.’

It was unfortunate, but there was nothing that he could do for her. He did consider giving her a number, but since he was going to America, it would make her wait indefinitely. KangYoon just walked by and left the lobby.

“Haa.... Should I give up?”

The girl drooped her head while sighing deeply

KangYoon visited the studio to meet with Eddios. He had seen that there was group practice today. But when he did go there, Eddios was nowhere to be seen, but....

“Hey!”

“What the?”

...JooAh, with her lively voice, was there. She ran into him as soon as she saw him.

“Are you crazy? Why are you quitting your job?”

“...How many times do I have to explain this.”

“What, what, what?”

Seeing JooAh looking like she would attack him if he did not

manage to satisfy her, KangYoon had to explain yet again that he was preparing to leave the country due to matters with his sister. His head ached from explaining the same thing repeatedly.

“...Ah, sheesh! HeeYoon, that girl, she didn’t tell me anything.”

“It’s about her brother, so she probably kept quiet until I told you about it.”

“Even so! Ah, really....”

JooAh didn’t like this. She had just found someone to her liking, but now he was leaving. Although meeting new people and saying goodbye to acquaintances was frequent in this industry, she didn’t like how this was ending.

“Now that I think about it, you were my first project, JooAh.”

“Really? I thought you were a complete veteran at this.”

“Really? That’s good.”

“Though, you didn’t look promising at first.”

“Hey.”

Yeah, she just had to end it on that note. However, she still couldn’t hide her disappointment.

“America, huh? Well.... It’s a little far, but I guess I could go meet you. Where is it? LA?”

“Yeah.”

“What the. That’s right by the branch. I thought it would be hella far. You’ll treat me if I go to your house, right?”

“.....”

JooAh was very cool with that. Seeing her act both disappointed and cool, KangYoon ended up laughing.

“That’s so like you. Fine, come. I’ll treat you to tons and tons of rice, and just rice.”

“What the heck. That’s why you don’t have a girlfriend.”

“Then introduce me to one, damn you.”

Both KangYoon and JooAh tried to act superior.

Although they looked delighted on the outside, they still could not hide their disappointment to each other.

After the matters with the takeover were finished, KangYoon met up with his acquaintances and bid them farewell. From his harmonics teacher, Professor Choi ChanYang, to Lee JunYeol, The ACE, and many other people – they all promised to see in the future.

Everything went smoothly. Passports, flight tickets, residence in America – everything was being prepared well.

And at the last day of work.

“So, today’s the last day.”

Chairman Won JinMoon visited his office when he was cleaning his stuff up.

“Yes. I was about to go to you just now....”

“No, it’s fine now that I’m here. Do you know? It’s hard to look for your replacement.”

Chairman Won JinMoon shook his head. A planner with the skills and wits at the same level as KangYoon could not be found anywhere. He was both young and skillful... it really was a pity.

“Although there was an unfortunate incident near the end, I wish you could take only the happy memories here with you.”

“I am really thankful for everything you’ve done for me, Chairman.”

“Damn those bastards....”

Chairman Won JinMoon felt his headache whenever he thought

about the directors. They should stop at a certain point. Achievements were something that should be gotten not by making the rival look bad but to raise their own merits, but they could not do that.

“I’m fine with it now.”

“Okay then. We might see each other later. Be careful on your trip.”

Chairman Won JinMoon extended his hand. It was a large, and weathered hand. KangYoon grabbed it with his own. The chairman patted his shoulders and left the office like that.

KangYoon grabbed his stuff and headed to the lobby. When he leaves this time, he would really never be able to enter again.

‘It’s a pity.’

Walking into the lobby, KangYoon looked at the past. Everything he did was definitely not easy. However, with the power to visualize music, his experience, and knowledge of ‘future’ events, he overcame them one by one. Thinking about it now, it was like a miracle.

When he put his stuff into his car in the underground parking lot, the sound of high heels came closer to him. When he looked around to see who it was, he saw Min JinSeo rushing towards him.

“JinSeo?”

“Sir!”

She didn’t say much. As soon as she arrived, she grabbed his hands tight.

“Sir, please don’t go, please?”

“It’s....”

She looked as if she was about to cry – just like the time with Jung MinAh.

Min JinSeo was panicking as well. She was overseas all this time due to filming, and as soon as she had entered the country, she heard the frightening news that KangYoon was quitting, and rushed straight here.

“Why? What happened? I heard you did nothing wrong. Then why are you leaving? Just what is happening? Who is it? Who dares to-.”

“One by one. Let’s go over things one by one. First, calm down, and- “

“Do you think I can calm down in a situation like this?”

Unlike normal, she even screamed out. Even KangYoon took a few steps back in surprise. Min JinSeo’s manager tried to stop her, but KangYoon gestured that it was okay.

“I heard the outline. Let’s go.”

“Go where?”

“To fire all the people that put you here!”

KangYoon was about to burst out laughing. At this rate, she was really going to just crash into the company. She acted very matured usually, but at times like these, she showed the teenager side to her. Although it looked like she was acting immature, KangYoon was thankful that someone was on his side.

“JinSeo, it’s fine. Everything’s been taken care of. And also....”

KangYoon calmly told her that he was going to America because of the matters with his sister. The heavily panting Min JinSeo finally calmed down.

“...Then... it can’t be helped?”

“Yes. Even for me, I have to study more to do more things in the future. I won’t be staying here forever either way.”

“.....”

Min JinSeo's fiery eyes watered up. She let go of KangYoon's hands and turned around.

“JinSeo.”

“.....”

KangYoon tried to console her. However, she gestured him back. He still tried to do it anyway.

“Why are the people around me all crybabies....”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders.

Min JinSeo finally calmed down after quite a while. She looked up at KangYoon with reddened eyes.

“...How long are you planning to stay there?”

“About a year, I guess. It might take longer... but for now, that's the plan.”

“That's a long time.”

“But when I come back, you, JinSeo, must be the greatest actress of Korea, right?”

At his words, Min JinSeo's eyes filled with confidence.

“Sure, I will.”

“At that time, I wouldn't be able to see you even if I want to.”

“If it's you, then, well....”

Min JinSeo blurred her words. She implied that that wasn't the case at all. However, KangYoon just stood up from that place.

“Well, then, o-great-actress-of-the-future; I'll be on my way. I have a lot to take care of.”

KangYoon opened the door to his car. Now, it was time to depart.

“Sir....”

“JinSeo, then see you lat- “

At that moment, Min JinSeo suddenly an into his arms. KangYoon tried to get her off in panic, but it was hard to do that when she had locked her fingers behind his back.

“JinSeo, what are you....”

“Just a moment. Just a moment.”

KangYoon couldn't do anything. He looked around to see if anyone was present, but there was no one there, even her manager was nowhere to be seen.

After a while, Min JinSeo let go of him.

“You, just what do you think you're do-.”

“I'll do the rest later.”

“What?”

“Goodbye.”

Then, she turned around without even seeing him off. KangYoon kept calling out to her, but she did not stop.

“Whoa.... Really.... Kids these days are frightening.”

KangYoon shook his head and got in the car.

‘He won't think that I'm a strange kid, right?’

Min JinSeo's heart was still thumping hard. She originally never intended to do this. However, she couldn't endure the fact that he was leaving.

‘Later, I'll definitely....’

Min JinSeo felt that she couldn't take the figure of him leaving. However, it will all be different later – resolved she as she headed to the office.

“Oppa! Still not ready yet?”

“I’m going!”

HeeYoon shouted outside the door when KangYoon also exited the house with a large travel case.

Today, finally, KangYoon and HeeYoon were leaving for America.

He could hear car horns outside. KangYoon got on President Lee HyunJi’s car with his sister.

“To think you’d go this far for us.... Thank you very much.”

“This much is nothing. We’ll be working together in the future.”

When the car went onto the highway, the road was very empty. The car sped up and HeeYoon started muttering while looking out the window.

“It looks like the countryside. Is that the railway? Wow....”

Like a little child, HeeYoon was getting surprised at the smallest things. KangYoon made a satisfied smile looking at her. Then suddenly, President Lee HyunJi asked.

“How long are you planning on staying there?”

“I don’t know yet. It will be a year at minimum, but I think it might be longer.”

“Really? It looks like a lot of things would change by the time you’re back.”

“Right? Looks like I need to prepare a lot of things if I want to adjust.”

“You have great senses, so you’ll do well. Only then would I feel ensured investing in you.”

By now, investment had practically become reality. KangYoon shrugged his shoulders.

When they drove that fast, they arrived at the airport quite soon. They parked the car and headed to the departures section.

Before they went through the departure process, President Lee HyunJi extended her hand to KangYoon.

“Thanks for everything until now.”

“That’s for me to say.”

“See you in Korea. When I see you later, I guess we’d be business partners and not an employer and an employee.”

KangYoon laughed. He still hadn’t come to a decision yet. However, it seemed like President Lee HyunJi really thought about investing in him. Investments had to be done cautiously, whether it was the doing side or the receiving side. KangYoon avoided answering directly.

“When the time comes.... Please take care of me.”

“Okay. You might be late for your flight. Go in.”

KangYoon headed inside along with HeeYoon. President Lee HyunJi waved her hand at them.

Like that, the siblings headed to America.

After that, three years passed.

Chapter 81. Three Years Later, a New Beginning (1)

– Flight number XX0000 arriving from Los Angeles.....

Incheon International Airport was busy with numerous people visiting it every day. People of different features busily moved about with their travel cases, and people with staff name tags did their best to provide the utmost of services. When the announcement flowed out, some people started running. The airport was filled with vitality.

“It’s about time he’s here....”

Lee HyunJi was currently amidst numerous people. Looking at the dashboard, the flight had already arrived. Many people were exiting the arrivals door, but the person she was looking for wasn’t seen yet. There was no call either. It was a stifling situation.

“Am I the President or the secretary, I don’t know anymore...”

Grumbled Lee HyunJi. She knew well that the person she was waiting for might be late if the arrivals process took longer. However, considering the suffering she had been through in Korea while he was not here, she couldn’t help but say those words.

Fortunately, the person she was looking for finally entered her vision. His wide shoulders and long legs were impressive. With a tanned face, he was dragging a travel bag as he walked out at a leisurely pace.

“Mr. KangYoon. Over here.”

Lee HyunJi waved her hand. It seemed the other had noticed her as he ran over to her.

“It looks like you’ve waited for a while.”

“Not at all. Anyway, it’s been a long time, Mr. KangYoon. No, I guess I should call you President, now? It’s been half a year.”

“Now I don’t think I’ll get used to you calling me that.”

After shaking hands, the two headed to the parking lot. They exited the airport and drove on the relatively free highway.

“You’re quite tanned. It seems like you’ve been to a good place?”

“I visited Florida with HeeYoon before I came back.”

“Oh? Looks like HeeYoon’s in good health now, huh?”

“She’s normal now.”

Spoke KangYoon as though it was nothing. However, there were a lot of unspoken backstories in his words. For the first year, he could do practically nothing as he had to stay next to HeeYoon, and only after the 2nd year could he start doing his own things.

Lee HyunJi knew this well since she went to and from America in the past 3 years.

“I heard a few of the songs that HeeYoon composed last time, and they were quite good. She has a good sense as well. As expected of your sister.”

“She’s still ways off.”

Even though he said that he did feel good to hear someone compliment his own kin. KangYoon smiled lightly.

“You should have heard a lot about Korea when you were there, but the market has changed quite a lot recently.”

“For me personally, Chairman Won’s news was the most shocking. To see such a lively person, fall ill....”

“Me too. They say the world is unpredictable, and I think I know why. Isn’t that why I’m here?”

“Looks like we must go visit him first.”

KangYoon felt bitter. Chairman Won JinMoon controlled the rivalry between the board of Directors and the President’s using his authority and proved that he was the most veteran in this

industry. However, the sudden appearance of myocardial infarction (MI, heart attack) was frightening. With the chairman becoming like that, MG Entertainment was practically controlled by the decisions of the board of directors. The relatively weaker President's faction was pushed out, and because of that, Lee HyunJi had to abdicate from her position as President.

“You're right. But even so, I guess it's good that I don't have to deal with those stressful guys anymore. I even lost a lot of hair.”

“You lost hair? If you lose hair at your age....”

“Stop there.”

Lee HyunJi's expression crumpled slightly at the sensitive topic.

“Got it, President.”

“I'm a director now, President Lee KangYoon.”

“Hahaha. It's so awkward yet good to hear you call me President.”

“You must get used to it. You'll have to get used to it especially when we start expanding the company.”

The two also talked about the entertainment industry as a whole, the celebrities that KangYoon raised during his time at MG, as well as the plans for the future. It seemed like some time was necessary for KangYoon to adjust to the drastic changes that occurred in the Korean entertainment industry in the past 3 years.

While they were conversing, they eventually arrived at their new home, their new office. The office was in Yongsan, the building was a rather aged building with 2 stories. The words ‘WORLD ENTERTAINMENT’ was written on the sign as well.

“If we factor in the rental costs, Gangnam was a little too far-fetched. Just as you told me, I rented a 2-story building. Including the underground floor, there are 3 floors in total. Although it looks old on the outside, the interiors are quite good.”

KangYoon and Lee HyunJi entered the building.

“From now on, you are the President, Mr. KangYoon. I shall treat you like one.”

“Understood, Director.”

“That feels strange.”

When the two entered the 2nd floor, someone was waiting for them there. It was a woman in a suit with long hair. She was a woman in her 20s with a long neck and long legs.

(T/N: Okay, let me get the floor numberings straight. There will be no ‘0th floor’. It will be ground floor=1st floor, then the 2nd floor. It’s too confusing for me to keep up with different numbers on the Korean version and the translated version (I used to study in the UK where ground floor = floor 0))

“Director, welcome back.”

“Hello, Miss HyeJin. President, this is Miss Jung HyeJin. She’s in charge of administration and distribution of budget.”

“You’re the President? Hello? I’ve heard a lot about you.”

Hearing the word ‘President’, the lady named Jung HyeJin stiffly greeted him. KangYoon held her up saying that there was no need to go that far. KangYoon asked what she was doing until now and asked her to do well in the future.

Jung HyeJin brought them coffee, and KangYoon and Lee HyunJi sat in the office. Unlike moment before, the mood was slightly sunken. Both of them knew that it was time for the more serious topics.

“What kind of plans do you have, President?”

The first one to speak was Lee HyunJi. KangYoon took out a set of documents from his travel bag. When Lee HyunJi opened it, it was a series of music scores.

“It’s a score? Oh, this is the one from last time....”

“Yes, it’s the one that HeeYoon composed. Would you like to listen to it?”

KangYoon played the song directly from his phone. The bright melody that came from the piano immediately enraptured Lee HyunJi’s mind.

“The melody is bright, and it has a good feeling. Looks like it will be a good song after a good arrangement. Is there an arranged version as well?”

“I didn’t have enough time to do the arrangements.”

“Wait.”

Lee HyunJi found something strange in KangYoon’s words. ‘I’ didn’t have the time? Didn’t that mean that he was going to do it himself?

“You’ll be doing the arrangements...?”

“Yes. I’m planning to do it myself.”

“Hah....”

Lee HyunJi’s eyes widened in surprise. Arrangements? She was surprised to hear that KangYoon’s level of music was that high now.

“Arrangement isn’t easy. And it has been just 3 years? It might sound unpleasant for you, but you are a newbie in this industry with no experience. Who would buy that?”

Lee HyunJi was skeptical about this. Although she was being roundabout, she was basically asking him ‘do you have enough skills to do that?’. However, KangYoon looked back at her with unwavering eyes.

“I’ll let you listen to the song once it’s finished. Deciding at that time is also one method.”

“...You’re not the type to give false hope.”

She knew that KangYoon had arduously studied music until now. However, this was business. Lee HyunJi was very cautious in her decisions. She accepted to decide after listening to the final version.

“Let’s leave it at that for today. I’m still under jetlag.”

“Okay, President. Should I give you a ride home?”

“It’s fine, you must have your own work to do, director.”

“So it’s director now? It does sound quite awkward.”

Lee HyunJi said that it was fine and dragged KangYoon. She made KangYoon get on board her car and rode him to his house.

‘This is the beginning. Let’s do this.’

In front of his house, he waved to Lee HyunJi as she drove back and resolved to make a song that would surprise her.

When KangYoon entered the house, the house looked the same as before. Although the thick grass bothered him a little, there were no big changes. Of course, HeeYoon’s empty room did make him feel a little empty. KangYoon closed the door to HeeYoon’s room and opened the door to his.

‘Good. They’re all here.’

Inside the room were 2 synthesizers, 7 speakers, 1 subwoofer, as well as a newly ordered PC. Lee HyunJi got them on KangYoon’s request.

‘I appreciate it.’

Although they were in a relationship of investor and investee, this extent of consideration from her made him speechless. He resolved himself to not make her regret investing in him.

He connected the speakers to the PC and put the synthesizers on their stands. He set them up so that they would go around the monitor and hung the speakers high up so that he could ‘see’ them well. It was set up for him to monitor the musical notes.

Although he was tired due to jetlag, he still hurried up in setting them. After over 3 hours of installation and testing, KangYoon's room had turned into a personal studio.

(T/N: Someone tell me why he needs 2 synthesizers and how he can connect that many devices to the PC without an amplifier.)

‘Should I do it now?’

KangYoon looked at the score and started playing the synthesizer. When he did, a blue note flowed out from one of the speakers. The note created a constant light from its place. It was a weak blue light.

‘Let's add some drums.’

Continuing, he switched to drums and created a beat. Then, he fused it with the sound that he just played before. He set them to be played back on different speakers and played it back. This time, there was a blue note and a black note. The two notes combined and generated a stronger white light.

‘This looks good enough.’

He could see the notes and hear the sound well. It was satisfactory.

Now that he finished installing all these, fatigue overcame him. Although he didn't even unpack his stuff, he fell back on the bed and went to dreamland at the sense of accomplishment of having finished installing.

The era of girl groups. I referred to the music industry in the year 2011.

The competition between the unmoved 1st place since their debut, Eddios, and the close 2nd, DiaTeen, grabbed the attention of many fans. These girls, capable of singing, dancing, as well as general entertainment, induced the males in their 20s and 30s into

consumers in the pop market. A strong cash cow had formed.

After those two, the popularity of girl groups ended up producing numerous forms of girl groups; ushering in the Girl Group Era. However, dark always followed the light. There weren't that many groups that saw the light.

“We're free again today? It's boring. It's booooooooooring!”

The girl group, T&T, was one such group that did not see the light. One member, Jin SeAh, grumbled inside the studio as she rolled around on the floor. Agreeing, another member, Lee Min, also sighed deeply.

“We're free for a week already. Isn't there a small event or something.”

“Would we be here if there was? It's because our last album went down the drain....”

Grumbled Joo JungHyun. She frowned a lot, remembering back to their last album.

All the members grumbled, but their leader, Kim HyoRin had nothing to say to them either. The song in their last single album was so crappy that it made her mad even now. She only consoled the others by saying that they should forget about past matters.

Just as when they were powerlessly sitting there, a sturdy man walked in. It was their manager, Min SangCheol.

“What the, why are you all like this?”

“Cuz we're unemployed, duh.”

Kim SeSol grumbled. All the women made pitiful expressions in sympathy. He nodded in understanding and continued speaking.

“We'll be recording a new song soon.”

“Ah, yeah. It's been a month.”

When Jin SeAh acted sarcastically, manager Min SangCheol

coughed awkwardly. The pitiful results were embarrassing for him as well.

“It... it’ll be alright this time. We’ll get the song from outside.”

“...That’s good. I was worried that we might have to do President’s again.”

When Lee Min said those words, Manager Min SangCheol sweated cold sweat. With their first, second, and third songs producing pitiful results, it was no wonder that their trust in the President was so low.

“Anyway! You just need to wait a little more, okay? I’ll let you girls run events like hell.”

“Oh, sure.”

Manager Min SangCheol tried to cheer them up, but they were all as unmotivated as they could be.

After a brief sleep, KangYoon felt that his fatigue was slightly relieved and started working right away.

The song that HeeYoon composed was the delightful, rhythmic kind. KangYoon wanted to bring out the essence of that. He was also planning to add hook-like elements as well.

‘The melody is low at first, so let’s go at a slower pace.’

KangYoon looked for a variation of an organ on the synthesizer. It was not an easy task to find the right organ sound among the many variations of organs there. However, once he tried them one by one while keeping in mind the feeling he wanted, he found it quite soon.

When he pressed on a key, a beige-colored note flowed out. He added the drums from before. Then, the light turned grey. Something went wrong.

‘This isn’t the one.’

Although it sounded fine by itself, it wasn't that good. KangYoon continued his search for a sound and repeated the same process of playing the sound and combining with the rest. Although the organ sounds were similar to each other, this particular one had a slight reverb to it. Thinking that this sounded okay, KangYoon added the drums as well. However, the what appeared in his eyes was grey yet again. In fact, it was a much darker grey due to the thudding sound of the drums.

‘Ugh....’

KangYoon had to stop the playback due to the uniquely murky feeling that the grey light gave him. It seemed that the influence had become bigger as he felt the effects on his skin.

‘Again....’

He resolved himself again and started browsing through more organ sounds. This one sounded alright, with the volume LEDs looking fine as well. However, as the song progressed, the light turned darker and darker until it eventually turned black.

“Uurgh!”

KangYoon immediately turned off the sound. He felt as though a murky kind of electricity just went past him. It didn't just end with the foggy feeling that he had before.

‘Organ’s definitely not the one.’ (T/N: Well, duh. Organs in pop? Shakes head)

Thanks to that. KangYoon could realize. He went past the organs tab and went to strings. Then, he put in a relatively brighter-sounding set of strings with a little bit of bass. Then, he combined it with the drums again. When he did, the strings flowed out gently after a thudding beat from the drums and the notes started generating white light. A black note and a white note met together to create a stage of white light.

‘This is it.’

Finding a sound was no easy task. When he looked at the time, 3 hours had passed already. Even though the entire song was only about 3 minutes long, it wasn't easy to work on it.

For the entire day, KangYoon did not leave his studio.

Chapter 82. Three Years Later, a New Beginning (2)

“Mr. KangYoon. It’s been a long time.”

Professor Choi ChanYang hugged KangYoon in delight as soon as he saw him. KangYoon did the same.

“Professor. It’s been a while.”

They sat down after a simple greeting. The two met after 3 years in an empty café with faint music. Although they exchanged news through phone calls and other things until now, it felt different to meet in person.

“You studied a lot of music in America, right?”

“Yes, I had a lot of opportunities. Although I couldn’t go to college... I have encountered just as many things as if I went to one. I studied a lot.”

“Well, then. Should we see the results?”

Professor Choi ChanYang did not say many things. KangYoon gave him the song that he was arranging for the entire day as his ‘results’. Professor Choi ChanYang’s face turned strange as he plugged the earphones into his phone and listened to the song.

After around 3 minutes, he took his earphones off.

“Nice. Did you do the arrangement yourself?”

“Yes.”

“I can see you put a lot of effort in. It’s a good song. Though, I don’t think it’s finished.”

Professor Choi ChanYang stuck his thumb up. The beats were easy to listen to, and the rhythmic melody was very easy to the ears. This guy only learned the basics of harmonics before he went, but now he was able to produce such results. It was a pleasant

surprise.

“Yes. I finished the bass line, but I’m thinking of adding some more.”

“The strings are good. But it might sound a little too repetitive if you use the same thing repeatedly so what about using another effect towards the end?”

“Got it. You sure are different, professor.”

“Not at all.”

While KangYoon felt sorry, Professor Choi ChanYang shook his hand.

“I did promise, didn’t I? That I’ll be your consultant once you start your business.”

“Oh, that....”

“I think it will be fun – working with you, that is. Whether it’s today or in the future.”

“I’ll be thankful if you help me. You need not worry about compensation.”

“I’m fine with anything.”

KangYoon did not even think about making Professor Choi ChanYang work with him without any compensation. He was definitely going to reward him for his help. Though, he was quite poor right now because of HeeYoon’s medical fees and starting a business....

The topic switched to a good mood.

“Did you hear about HyunAh?”

“HyunAh? No, I didn’t hear anything at all.”

There were people that KangYoon managed to stay in touch with, and there were people that he couldn’t contact at all. Lee HyunAh belonged to the latter.

“HyunAh is currently facing a great crossroad of her life. She got a call from a major. It seems like she was offered a place from Yerang Entertainment.”

“Oh, Yerang....”

KangYoon admitted that Lee HyunAh was good enough for that. She was even a composer on top of her good voice. It was definitely worthy of someone scouting her. If it was one of the three major entertainment companies of Korea, it would definitely help her out in the future. However, Professor Choi ChanYang’s words didn’t end there.

“But they want her alone and doesn’t want the rest of the band. It looks like she’s agonized over it.”

“It’s definitely not easy to succeed as a band. Although a band may look cool, there are all sorts of fancy stages in today’s TV, and a band would require more time in installing those instruments too.”

KangYoon sighed, saying that it was no wonder. Professor Choi ChanYang pulled in his chair.

“What would you say to her?”

“Sorry?”

“If HyunAh asks you what she has to do in a situation like that, what would you say to her?”

This was a difficult question. KangYoon closed his eyes after saying that he would think about it for a moment. Abandon the teammates that were with her through thick and thin? That was not nice. However, if a large company was appealing to her, then it was likely that they would support her quite heavily.

‘That’s a difficult matter. But if she plans to stay in this industry for a long time...’

Although it was indeed a difficult question, he found the answer

after thinking about the basics. KangYoon calmly spoke up his mind.

“If it were me, I would politely refuse that offer.”

“Really? Isn’t it a pity to let go of such a big opportunity?”

“That’s true, but the fact that one of the big three contacted her means that HyunAh has that value. Won’t there eventually be a company that would take her in along with the rest of the band? If she accepts their offer right now, it would be hard to take the tag that she abandoned her teammates. Fans these days are frightening, you know?”

“Hm....”

Professor Choi ChanYang thought about it for a moment before nodding his head.

“I’ll tell her exactly that.”

“Sorry?”

“She asked me that question. Thanks for the wise answer.”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders. Although he did expect it a little, he never knew HyunAh asked him that for real. Professor Choi ChanYang was witty alright.

After they finished their conversation, they left the café and Professor Choi ChanYang spoke to KangYoon with a smile.

“Oh, yeah. Mr. KangYoon. I forgot that HyunAh told me to tell you one thing.”

“She did?”

“I’ll tell you word for word.”

He suddenly took a deep breath.

“I’ll kill you the next time I see you.”

“What?”

“There. I told you, word for word. See you next time.”

“Whoa....”

Seeing Professor Choi ChanYang leave with a laugh, KangYoon couldn't hide his awkward expression.

“Oh shoot... Maybe I should have told her before I went there....”

Considering how busy he was back then, it was impossible to contact every single one of his acquaintances. Anyway, KangYoon just shrugged his shoulders and went home, thinking that it wouldn't really amount to much trouble.

Having just created the company, Lee HyunJi was very busy. She used her connections she made while she was the President at MG Entertainment to make foundations for the business, and she also had to watch the trends of the entertainment industry. For KangYoon to focus on his work, this kind of work was necessary for her to do.

And thanks to that, there came a day where they could use their ‘infrastructure’ of the company. KangYoon took to his company, the song he arranged.

“Is it this one? Good Feelings? It reminds me of something.”

“Yes.”

Receiving the score, she connected the USB that KangYoon gave her. Soon, KangYoon's song started sounding out in the office.

“I guess it's kinda... retro? Is this HeeYoon's voice?”

“Yes. She wrote the lyrics herself as well.”

“That's amazing. She even managed to record it.”

Listening to it, Lee HyunJi umped her shoulders while listening to the rhythmic yet soft music. It was the kind that gave her a sense of déjà vu but didn't feel boring.

“It does feel very retro. But it’s not too repetitive either. This actually feels great.”

Lee HyunJi raised her voice as though she really liked this song. KangYoon calmly explained as he watched her being satisfied.

“I emphasized friendliness, comfort, and delight. That’s how this came about. From what I saw, the trend seems to be that of reminiscence of the 90s. It’s like how trends cycle.”

“You’re right. It’s good. This should work.”

Lee HyunJi didn’t say a lot of things. She received the USB and stood up.

“Where are you going?”

“I should work as well. Us staying still means that we’re losing money, you know?”

“Ah, that’s true.”

“You should also plan out how to operate the company, President. Now, our World Entertainment rests on your shoulders after all. Then I’ll be off for a bit.”

Lee HyunJi was the action faction. She left the office as though she was going to sell the song as soon as possible.

“Amazing. Looks like I should put more effort in if I don’t want to lose.”

He even wondered how she managed to stay in her seat all day while she was the President at MG Entertainment. Thinking that he should repay her for her vitality, KangYoon started making plans.

The evening of the same day.

Jung HyeJin (the employee) knocked and entered his office.

“President, I’ll take my leave.”

“Okay, be careful on your way home.”

After she went home, KangYoon also got ready to leave. On his desks were papers full of plans that he had devised.

Just as he was about to open the door to his office, there was a woman standing in front of it.

“WHAT the!”

“Why are you so surprised?”

“...It’s you....”

“What the hell? Why is your reaction so bland?”

He was surprised at first but reacted very blandly after seeing who it was. Disappointed at seeing that, she put a vase on the desk while pouting. On the vase were the words ‘Congratulations on opening.

KangYoon had to give up on going home and had to make some coffee. She accepted it naturally and sat down while crossing her legs.

(T/N: In South Korea, some large-scale ‘individuals’ (companies or people) present a large plant with a ribbon that has greetings and their name on it at certain events like opening a store, funerals, weddings, etc. I’m guessing this is a smaller version of that.) “It’s been a month. Have you been well, oppa?”

“...Yeah. Yeon JooAh, you damned....”

“Ouch.”

KangYoon smacked her, JooAh, on the head. It was a smack filled with personal resentment. JooAh pouted before returning to her original, refreshing attitude again.

“Hahaha. Are you still mad about going to the beach without telling you?”

“Do you think that’s a small matter? Huh? Why did you get HeeYoon to go to a place like that?”

“What’s wrong with going to the sea? You know? HeeYoon put on some weight and she looks hella good. The men are just all....”

“Wha-wha-wha-wha-wha-wha-what? Tell me that again.”

When KangYoon’s eyes turned fiery, JooAh shrunk back while twitching. She felt that she went too far and pulled back.

“Sheesh, I can’t even joke with you. Fine, fine. How many times do I have to apologize?”

“Forget it. Anyway, next time, don’t ever take her to somewhere in secret.”

“Next time it will be a nightclub.”

“What was that?”

JooAh never backed out. However, she had to since KangYoon didn’t look like the negotiable kind at all. Of course, this was all a joke.

KangYoon took out some wine and snacks from the office. They were the stuff that JooAh looked for a lot when they met in America. After a round of drinks, JooAh started getting serious.

“Is work going well?”

“It’s just started. How are you doing? You had a hard time in America.”

“Yeah... did you really have to say that?”

“It’s revenge.”

“You are such a bad guy, you know.”

JooAh grumbled. However, her face had darkened slightly. KangYoon also stopped joking and spoke seriously.

“Going to America was a little too hasty. It wouldn’t have been late even if you waited a little more. Whose plan was that?”

“It was from the directors. I also thought that I was good enough. Perhaps the Chairman would have opposed it if he was healthy. I

thought I'd at least get into the top 50 of the billboard, but I wasn't even in the top 100. I'm so embarrassed now I can't lift my head in public anymore."

JooAh shook her head in embarrassment. She slowly climbed her way to the top of Japan and knocked on the doors of America using that achievement and stability, only to fail. She had to return home in bitterness. Although she talked about it very easily, failure was very bitter.

KangYoon didn't say much to her in consolation. She was probably here to just voice out her thoughts. He knew well that the best he could do was to listen.

"Sheesh, why did you have to leave the company.... Dammit, those trashy directors. Do you know that I've flipped over the company several times after you left?"

"You did?"

"I just went on a strike saying that I won't work for a while. I just rebelled saying that I can't believe in people like them. Hehe."

"Yeah, yeah. I've heard that over 10 times already."

She said this every time she came over in America. JooAh still insisted.

"Listen anyway."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Anyway. You should thank me you know? I tell you news about the other kids, give you the latest trends. Where could you find someone like me? Right?"

"Yeah, yeah. I'm thankful."

Although he said that like a complaint, he was indeed very thankful to JooAh. When they were in America, she became a friend and a motivation for everyday life for HeeYoon. To JooAh also, the meetings with KangYoon and HeeYoon were like a

comfortable rest.

She seemed to have gotten slightly drunk as she started to leak laughs.

“Oppa, hehe, do you know about JinSeo?”

“JinSeo? You told me last time.”

“Hehe, did I? Ah~ JinSeo is a scaaaary kid, you know? When you left, I only rebelled from working, but she, that girlie, threatened to leave the company. She even told them that she’d pay the penalty for breaching the contract. So, the company was in an uproar for quite a while. A quiet kid is really scary when she gets angry, you know?”

“I must admit, she’s quite bold. But why would she say that? She’d have a hard life.”

“Giggle Well~ I wonder why~.”

JooAh pointed towards KangYoon while giggling. She was weak to alcohol. KangYoon judged that this was enough and put away the drink and the snacks before lifting JooAh up. When they left the office, JooAh’s manager was with them.

“Oh, team leader Lee.... No, how am I supposed to call you now?”

“You can call me with whatever you’re comfortable with. It’s been a while.”

Perhaps KangYoon’s footsteps were big, but JooAh’s manager didn’t change his attitude towards KangYoon even after 3 years. KangYoon put JooAh, who said to go for round 2, in the van and closed the door.

“Be careful on your way.”

“Then I’ll see you later.”

JooAh seemed like she was causing a mess in the van, but KangYoon just waved his hand. The van seemed to shake once before disappearing with a swoosh.

‘I should get some rest too.’

KangYoon headed home while half-drunk.

Lee WooSung, the CEO of Laurel Entertainment, and its group, T&T were currently selecting a title song for their new album. While listening to four candidate songs, they discussed which one was the best.

As a result, 2 fell, and 2 remained.

“So, it’s down to ‘Good Feelings’ and ‘Aha’. What do you think we should go with?”

Urged Lee WooSung as he told the girls to choose freely. However, the members of T&T didn’t look like that at all.

‘In the end, he’ll go with what he likes.’

‘It will be ‘Aha’. He’ll make up all sorts of reasons for that.’

Jin SeAh and Kim HyoRin leaned towards ‘Good Feelings’ but couldn’t express it easily. They already noticed what their President wanted to do. The other members also grumbled on the inside, having realized what was happening.

“Go ahead and choose. ‘Aha’ has a sexy theme and a fast beat. It’s slightly lewd too. And this ‘Good Feelings’..... Hm, well. It feels quite old to me....”

President Lee WooSung definitely wanted to do ‘Aha’. It was hard to reject the will of the President in a company. Just as the members were about to unwillingly agree, one lady raised her hand. It was Lee Min.

“I think ‘Good Feelings’ is better.”

“...And the reason?”

“We failed the last time when we went with a sexy theme, so I don’t think it’s a good idea to do it again. Also, I feel that this song

is more comfortable to the ears.”

“Ehem.”

President Lee WooSung said okay and looked at the others. The one who met eyes with him was Kim SeSol. She wasn't the talkative type, so the gaze of the President pressured her. All gazes looked at her. She felt scared. However....

‘We can't fail this time too!’

Desperation won over shyness. Kim SeSol gulped before voicing her opinions.

“I.... I think Good Feelings... is b... better.”

The others seemed to have gained courage from her words as they started agreeing.

“Shouldn't we go with something we didn't try before? A lot of idol groups are ‘stripping’ because of the sexy theme these days. I think it will be good to go with something else.”

“I think Good Feelings is better.”

Joo JungHyun and Jin SeAh voiced their opinions as well. This was a reversal.

President Lee WooSung turned around to see Kim HyoRin. It was a silent pressure for her.

‘Unni, unni!’

‘Unni, please!’

The members of T&T were desperate. They did not wish to miss their opportunity to rise just because of the strange songs their President gave them. The President was indeed scary, but the reactionless stage was much more frightening than that.

“I, also, think, Good Feelings... is better.”

President Lee WooSung became silent. With even the leader, who usually followed him, turning like that, he could not say anything.

He also knew that his songs were repeated failures. However, the reason he kept pushing on with it was because of the belief that they would eventually succeed one day. But this time, his song was rejected by the singers. What more, it lost against a trial song that he just brought for show.

After thinking for a moment, he accepted with a long sigh.

“...Okay. Let’s go with that.”

“Yes.”

President Lee WooSung drooped his head as he left the studio. Only after a long time he left did the members of T&T grab each other’s hands.

“Unni! We did it, finally!”

“It’s freedom!”

“Cheers!”

They got a song from the outside and not from the President!

The delight of having done that made everyone rejoice.

Chapter 83. Three Years Later, a New Beginning (3)

KangYoon and Lee HyunJi started their morning meeting with the coffee that Jung HyeJin brought them.

Lee HyunJi spoke in joy as she drank the coffee.

“We sold the song.”

“Really? Where?”

“T&T, they’re singers belonging to Laurel Entertainment. They want to use it for their title song this time.”

KangYoon brushed his memory, but the group T&T was not in his memories. They were probably one of the unknown singers in this era where girl group idols were everywhere.

“It’s the first time I heard of them. Are they new?”

“Not really. It’s been 2 years since they debuted, but they don’t have any songs that are hits. You should see them as veteran rookies.”

“No hits after 2 years.... Not really a good group, are they?”

KangYoon clicked his tongue. If there was no reaction from the public for two entire years, it meant that it was hard for them to appeal to the masses. He also thought that extreme measures were necessary at this point.

“Rather than the singers, their President is the problem. He’s known for his stubbornness. His name is Lee WooSung, and he seem to have mindset that the title songs must be made by him. There are a couple singers that did well with his choice.... But T&T definitely isn’t one of them. It looks like the songs he made for T&T don’t fit them very well.”

“Stubbornness is tough to deal with. Anyway, it’s a good thing

that our song is being used as the title song. When's the meeting?"

"I scheduled it for tomorrow. Is that fine with you?"

"Yes, then I'll go prepare...."

"Wait a sec."

Lee HyunJi stopped KangYoon as he was about to stand up. When he looked back, she gave him a caution.

"President. You must not step up before your opponent asks you to do something."

"Understood."

Hearing KangYoon's words, she repeated herself again as though it wasn't enough.

"You consider the completion rate very importantly. You take risks thinking that the singer must do well. It's fine that you do so, but we're running a business here. If we say that we'll do something it becomes a free service. Crafty individuals may try to exploit that. We, World Entertainment, have just taken our first step. If we keep giving out services from the get-go, we might have to keep doing it."

KangYoon understood what she was saying. She was worried about his personality, his care, for the singers. KangYoon said he understood and nodded his head.

"Got it. I'll watch out for that then."

"You are definitely a capable person, President. However, there will be people who will try to use you without properly paying the price, and that's what I'm worried about. I'm actually looking forward to how much profit you'll bring us."

President Lee HyunJi had a very strong conviction. KangYoon also smiled in response to her expectations.

The next day.

KangYoon went to Laurel Entertainment. It was a relatively decent-sized company that used a 3-storey building. When he entered, a staff led him to President Lee WooSung.

“Welcome. I was waiting.”

In the office, President Lee WooSung offered him some tea. President Lee WooSung did not bring up KangYoon’s past achievements. Nor did KangYoon – he only mentioned his name, and did not mention his past career. He wanted to be acknowledged purely based on skills alone.

“It’s a good song. It has a comfortable melody and will suit our girls very well.”

“Thank you for your words.”

“Would you like to meet them first?”

President Lee WooSung headed to the practice studio on the 3rd floor with KangYoon.

Five girls in training outfit were in the middle of practice against a mirror wall.

“Can you girls come over for a bit?”

When President Lee WooSung said that, the music turned off and everyone gathered around. He introduced them all to KangYoon. Everyone became delighted when he was introduced as the composer for ‘Good Feelings’.

After a round of introduction, they played the song once to refresh their memories and talk about their impressions of it.

A slightly fast retro-style melody filled the studio.

– Making up to look pretty – and wore my prettiest clothes –

“It’s so good.”

“The more I hear it, the better it gets.”

Joo JungHyun and Lee Min were ecstatic. Though, President Lee

WooSung saw them in a bad light. However, the two girls kept praising the song and President Lee WooSung's expression twisted even more.

‘What the?’

KangYoon turned around to President Lee WooSung to talk to him about the song, but his eyes were somewhat off. KangYoon was confused. There was no way he would feel good when he saw the Lee WooSung glaring at the singers that were complimenting the song. The members of T&T kept complimenting the song, seemingly oblivious to his glares.

When the song ended, President Lee WooSung asked.

“How is it? Is it okay?”

“Yes.”

When Lee Min said that without a shred of hesitation, President Lee WooSung's eyes trembled slightly.

“R.... really?”

“The melody is somehow addictive. I think a good choreography is all we need.”

Added Joo JungHyun.

“Oh... really. Do you think so too, SeSol?”

“It's really good.”

President Lee WooSung asked Kim SeSol, who usually followed his intentions, but she was not that much different from the others either.

‘Is he trying to haggle?’

KangYoon felt slightly disgusted as he watched President Lee WooSung's actions. Whether he didn't like the song, or he wanted to haggle, he definitely did have some shady intentions.

‘I don't like him, he's rude too. What do I do?’

Although he was a newbie in this field, KangYoon had confidence in the song. It wasn't just conviction from his efforts. The song was created with his special ability as well as effort. He could feel the might of the white light from the song.

While KangYoon was pondering about that, the tug of war between the President and the members continued. KangYoon spoke after a while.

“Why don't we decide after you sing it?”

“Eh?”

Everyone turned around to him.

“No matter how great the song is in your opinion; you'd need to sing it first to see if it fits a singer or not. On my way here, I even saw a recording studio. I think it will be better to decide after you sing it for yourselves.”

Hearing his words, President Lee WooSung and the members of T&T came to a truce and nodded their heads. KangYoon's words were reasonable.

“Then let's decide after trying it. Girls, is that fine with you?”

“Yes.”

President Lee WooSung left saying he'd open the studio. Then, Jin SeAh complained as soon as he left.

“Sheesh, he keeps acting like that because he wants to do his own song.... This one's good, can't we just go with it?”

“SeAh, shush.”

“Oh....”

When Kim HyoRin shushed her, Jin SeAh finally became conscious of KangYoon and shut herself up. However, KangYoon already realized what was happening when she said that.

‘They don't believe in the President. Well, that must be because

how they failed until now. It's a little bit of a pity.'

KangYoon felt bitter. He felt that President Lee WooSung was like him of the past where he always failed.

(T/N: She is actually called "student JiMin" here, but since there is no such thing in English, I'll use 'miss'. Just be aware that she's a student.)

"Miss JiMin has a good voice, and your guitar skills are good as well. You have plenty of potential to be a music artist."

Kim JiMin's expression brightened at the positive feedback. However, words must be listened to the end.

"However, our company is currently not looking out for an artist. I'm sorry. What we want as a company are trainees to become part of a girl group idol, not a potential musical artist."

"Is that so....."

"It's a pity that we don't have the room to take you in. I wish that we'd meet at a better place next time."

Listening to the male judge's soft words, Kim JiMin greeted and left.

'It's girl group everywhere....'

Leaving the company, Kim JiMin's shoulders dropped in disappointment. It had already been 4 years since she decided to become a singer, and practiced music. However, no one recognized her passion for music as well as her songs. Many companies said that they wanted trainees to be part of a girl group and did not take her in, who had a short height and was far from skilled in dancing.

She even went as far as to practice dancing, which she wasn't talented in, to become a trainee. However, her stiff body could not follow the movements of other aspiring girls.

"Haa...."

Carrying the guitar powerlessly, the girl in the uniform walked on the street. She felt hopeless now that she failed the audition as well. She was annoyed by the cold wind blowing. However, her phone suddenly vibrated.

– Announcement for Korea ONE STAR Seoul region auditions. 2011...

It was the results of her application to a public TV audition that was hot nowadays. Kim JiMin's shoulders suddenly stood erect again.

‘Yes. Even if I fail for the 100th time, I just need to try again for the 101st time.’

She held up the guitar case as she resolved herself.

The recording studio in Laurel Entertainment was small and cozy. Compared to the super-large mixer in MG Entertainment, the number of channels and even the number of speakers were smaller. However, it had all the necessary components such as glass screens and sound dampening materials.

“Then let's get ready.”

President Lee WooSung sat down and put on his headphones. The members of T&T also entered the booth and stood in their positions with scores in their hands. They exercised their voice while President Lee WooSung also prepared to record. He soon signaled that he was ready.

“Should we start?”

According to his hand signal, the song began. Since they didn't formally separate the song into individual parts yet, they improvised it. First up was their sub-vocal, Lee Min.

– You are – the greatest gift – wait for me –

Lee Min's voice ran across the studio. Her voice was very light

and bright just like the music.

– My heart is burning—Please tell me—

Kim SeSol came next. She added more power into the light intro.

After that the song progressed very smoothly. The main vocals receiving the song added more and more power. The repeated but comfortable melody was nice to everyone's ears. All members raised their voices at the climatic point.

However, unlike the members of T&T who were singing their hearts out, President Lee WooSung shook his head in dissatisfaction. Even while controlling the mixer, he didn't seem quite satisfied.

KangYoon was also sighing behind him.

‘Why is it grey?’

When their musical notes combined, rays of grey light were being emitted. KangYoon had to endure the murky electric feeling the whole time. Even though it was definitely white when he finished composing the song. He could not understand what was happening.

After the song ended, the members of T&T left the recording room with slightly agitated expressions, and President Lee WooSung let them listen to the recording. The girls tilted their heads in confusion when they heard that their own singing was even worse than the guide singer doing it.

“That's strange. It definitely felt good though... does it not fit us?”

Hearing Joo JungHyun's words, Kim SeSol chimed in.

“Might as well be. Perhaps this song does not match well with us.”

“Is it....”

With all the members tilting towards the ‘not matching’ team,

President Lee WooSung finally smiled.

At that time, KangYoon stepped up.

“Can we do it once again?”

“Sorry?”

President Lee WooSung asked back.

“I just feel that it’s a pity. In my opinion it suits them quite well, so I think we should try again.”

“Well... okay then.”

President Lee WooSung made a strange expression before going to the mixer seat again. At that moment, KangYoon spoke again.

“Can I have a look at it this time?”

“...Go ahead, I guess.”

President Lee WooSung stepped back with a doubtful expression. KangYoon then put on the headset and controlled the mixer to get a feeling of the voice range. Kim HyoRin inside the booth was a little surprised, but KangYoon apologized and continued.

“We’ll start from the microphone settings.”

Since there was only 1 omnidirectional microphone, the sound signals were very important. Even though the microphone would receive sound from all directions, it wasn’t easy for it to receive voices from 5 people all equally. In cases like this, the mixer was important.

KangYoon told them all to sing and adjusted the volume. However, the gauge was going too high even though the voices of T&T weren’t that loud at all. He could hear wind noises from his headset.

‘The voices are equal, but there’s too much unwanted noise.’

KangYoon controlled the device so that no unwanted noise could be amplified. He also slightly lowered the high pitch and raised the

bass slightly. Then, he entered the booth and even put a windshield over the microphone. It was to prevent any useless noise from entering.

“Wow.....”

The members of T&T were surprised at his degree of preparation. Even though this wasn't the official recording, he was showing such a high degree of meticulousness.

KangYoon listened to the headset again and heard that there were no unnecessary wind noises and was finally about to give the start signal. But then, something flashed in his head.

‘This guy. Did he not properly do the setting on purpose?’

Making them sing under such horrible conditions, it was no wonder the song turned grey. When KangYoon looked at President Lee WooSung, he only looked back at him with no expression. KangYoon was assured.

‘He did it on purpose.’

He had heard that the CEO was stubborn to do his own pieces, and it seemed so. He even went far as to hinder. KangYoon felt flabbergasted about this, but did not express it. Composers were supposed to do their talking with their music. He only needed to squash him to death with this.

“Then let's begin.”

KangYoon gave the signal. Then, T&T began their singing.

Chapter 84. Three Years Later. a New Beginning (4)

– You are – the greatest gift – wait for me –

First was Lee Min again. She started off lightly just like before. The yellow notes from her generated white light after mixing with the recording.

– My heart burns – Please tell me –

Kim SeSol chimed in and the white light shook. A green note was coming out of her. When her light was added, white light gained strength. Unlike just a moment before when there was a little bit of grey light, there wasn't any grey at all.

– I know that feeling of being in love – I know the feeling of being excited –

While everyone was under surprise, Jin SeAh decorated the next part.

‘Her voice is a little weak.’

It wasn't that the white light disappeared. Her voice was good and clear. However, it was a little weak so he wished it could be a little stronger. KangYoon boosted her a little. Then, the light became stronger after receiving a little bit of strength.

The song continued on. Perhaps due to the proper sound setting, the grey light was no longer visible anywhere. Even the TNT members were delighted as they sung.

– Don't tell me why —

When everyone sung in unison at the climax bit, the sound meter went all the way up to yellow. The white light also reached its peak. KangYoon was satisfied with the voices he could hear through the headset. Although he would have to be even more detailed if he wanted to record, this was more than enough for the

song selection.

After the song finished, the members of TNT left the booth in joyous expressions.

“This is so good.”

“Didn’t I say that we must absolutely do this?”

Joo JungHyun and Lee Min, who were of the same age, were all excited thinking about doing this song. Jin SeAh agreed as well. Only the quiet Kim SeSol and the leader Kim HyoRin had no changes in their expressions.

Now that the song was over, President Lee WooSung approached.

“Should we go with this one?”

“Yeees!”

When he asked, they all answered without a shred of hesitation. Actually, he was also inwardly agreeing with this as well. He heard all this, if he didn’t accept, then it wouldn’t make any sense.

“...Okay. Let’s go with this.”

“Yaaay!:

“Mr. composer, then please take care of us.”

Amongst the cheering members of TNT, President Lee WooSung and KangYoon shook hands. KangYoon had a slight smile on his face.

‘This is the start.’

He was able to convince everyone with his music. He felt satisfied and proud of that. However, he also felt heavy thinking that this one song would decide a group’s fate.

When KangYoon came to work in the morning, President Lee HyunJi wasn’t there yet. She messaged him that she would be a little late as she drank with some TV station people late last night.

“Sheesh, they’re vicious alright. Drinking until 6 in the morning....”

Jung HyeJin shook her head after hearing about that. As she gave a cup of coffee to KangYoon, she preached that alcohol was bad.

“Seems like you don’t drink that much, Miss. HyeJin.”

“Yes, I can’t drink at all. Why are all the people in this industry drinking like there’s no tomorrow... It’s scary to think about it.”

“It differs from people to people. Anyway, Director Lee also must be having a hard time. If it’s the people from the TV stations, they must all be quite the alcoholics. She must be a female warrior.”

KangYoon felt pity for Lee HyunJi having a hard time doing business. It was also her tragic fate as a businesswoman. Though, she does drink quite well....

Around 10 in the morning, Lee HyunJi appeared at the office in immaculate form. There were no signs of having drunk until 6 am on her at all.

“Are you alright?”

“I won’t collapse from that just yet. I’m still young after all.”

“Amazing.”

KangYoon shook his head. Lee HyunJi, she was really like a female general.

The two started morning conference. Lee HyunJi talked about the things she talked about with the TV station people yesterday... well, today.

“Why don’t you try appearing in a TV programme?”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

KangYoon was slightly confused. A TV programme? He was no celebrity. This was out of the blue.

“Do you know about the programme called Korea ONE STAR?”

“Yes. Isn’t it an audition programme? I remember it causing a sensation in the music industry.”

“You’ve got an invitation, as a judge. Although it is just once as a guest judge in the regional preliminaries.... It should still help in public advertising.”

(T/N: Basically... K-POP star)

KangYoon doubted his ears. Appearing on TV? And this was an audition programme too. When KangYoon asked for more explanation, she continued.

“To simplify, it’s thanks to your actions three years ago, president. Yoy’ve done a lot of things back in MG. You’ll be going on the regional preliminaries as a judge with the title of a concert planner.”

“And that’s why you drank until so late....”

“Well, I guess I had some hard time. I did have to pour soju for those old asses.”

She drew a V with her fingers. KangYoon felt sorry for all her efforts.

“You must have had a hard time. And thank you as well.”

“Why thank me? It’s our work now. Don’t tell me you’re thinking of something weird because it was drinking? You’re no kid.”

“Pfft, there’s no way I would, is there?”

Although Lee HyunJi spoke lightly, it was a position she earned after a long night of drinking. KangYoon.resolved to himself that he would do well.

After that, he talked about how he settled the song and Lee HyunJi praised him a lot.

“You snapped that Lee WooSung’s stubbornness? Now that makes me refreshed.”

“Well, a good song is the best attack.”

“You really.... Sheesh, the contents are top-notch, I guess there’s no way he would say anything.”

Focus on the one, most important thing. That was KangYoon’s style. Lee HyunJi liked this kind of style.

After hearing a lot of things, the two ended the morning conference. Lee HyunJi departed from the office saying she had something to do, and KangYoon also went back to his seat and started working.

When KangYoon was working, his phone rang. It was from HeeYoon. KangYoon was delighted and received the call after leaving the office. After an exchange of greetings, KangYoon talked about how HeeYoon’s song was officially sold.

– Wow.... It’s somewhat... mystifying.

“What’s mystifying. You’re a full-fledged composer now.”

– I still can’t believe it. A song I made is going to be sung by a singer.

HeeYoon felt somewhat weird. In fact, KangYoon was happier about it than her. He told her that the music was under the alias ‘Muse’, and told her to wish that it would go well.

– Okay, then. Oh, did you find any singers that would debut from your company?

“No, I’ll have to start looking after this.”

– Please look for one quickly. I have a lot of songs to give out.

“Fine, fine.”

KangYoon said yes at HeeYoon’s enthusiastic words. Their call ended after wishing each other safety.

‘An audition, eh....’

KangYoon looked up the TV programme named Korea ONE STAR. It was an audition that any Korean citizen could participate in, and disregarded age, gender, and background.

‘The Seoul regionals. Looks like there will be a lot of people at least.’

Seoul had the highest population density in all of Korea. It was likely that there were many talented people as well. Although appearing on TV was important, there was also the implication of having to find a talent if he could find one. Even small entertainment companies would have to have trainees if they wanted a future.

‘As a small company, it’s probably impossible for us to have a lot of trainees, so should we go with a solo singer? The trend is girl groups.... But doing something that everyone else is doing will obviously lead to failure....’

KangYoon was agonized. It wasn’t easy to pick trainees. Trainees were precious existences for small companies like World Entertainment. They weren’t treated like spare tires for a car which would be the case for large companies.

‘It’s time.’

Time flew by while he was immersed in his thoughts about work. Today was the day they recorded ‘Good Feelings’. He already said beforehand that he would be present as the composer. KangYoon immediately headed to Laurel Entertainment.

When he arrived, an employee there guided KangYoon to the studio. The members of TNT were already in the booth, and President Lee WooSung was sitting in front of the mixer, controlling things.

“You’re here.”

“Hello.”

KangYoon greeted him and stood behind him. The members of TNT also waved their hands at KangYoon. Jin SeAh was getting ready to record.

“Did you divide the parts?”

“Yes, we just need to record now.”

President Lee WooSung was full of confidence, as though to say that everything was ready to go. KangYoon took a step back. The recording began.

– You are – the greatest gift – wait for me –

Jin SeAh did the intro. Like her outgoing personality, her voice was also quite strong and thick for a girl.

‘Isn’t this too strong for the intro?’

KangYoon was confused. This song wasn’t a kind that was supposed to start off loudly.

“SeAh, the sound is a little weak. Can we do it again after raising it a little?”

But unlike what he thought, President Lee WooSung asked for a stronger voice.

– Yes.

The recording resumed. The voices of TNT became stronger and stronger, but the white light in KangYoon’s eyes kept dimming. This was literally a waste of energy.

‘This is not it.’

KangYoon shook his head. He felt as though the song was being interpreted wrong.

It was the same afterwards. With this song, KangYoon pursued ease of singing that would stick to anyone’s minds. However, President Lee WooSung kept adding effects like echo when he

pursued this song.

‘Now I know why this place is so bad.’

This guy, just didn’t have any senses. This was the conclusion KangYoon came to. The white light became weaker and weaker. At this rate, the song would go haywire.

After watching quietly for a while, KangYoon eventually stepped up.

“Why don’t we try loosening a little at this bit?”

President Lee WooSung looked back at KangYoon who stayed quiet all this time. His eyes filled with displeasure.

“...Really?”

There was no way KangYoon did not know the implications behind that gaze. However, he continued on with his opinion while pretending not to notice it.

“As you said, president. It might be good to emphasize that feeling. However, I think that we might be able to add more rightness to the song if we loosen it up a little.”

“.....”

President Lee WooSung’s reactions were very bland as he did not like someone interfering. However, it would be bad to ignore the original composer’s opinions. He turned around to the mic after saying he understood.

“SeSol. Can we loosen up at the ‘feeling’ part?”

– Okay.

The reply came, and President Lee WooSung resumed the recording.

– I know that feeling of being in love – the feeling of excitement –

Kim SeSol loosened up a little. Then, the sound became softer. When her notes were mixed in, the light also became stronger.

“...Huh.”

President Lee WooSung involuntarily made a noise as though he felt something. KangYoon’s opinions wasn’t anything big, but it made a clear difference. However, he didn’t say anything since he didn’t want to admit it.

‘Sheesh, what a stubborn man.’

KangYoon clicked his tongue. However, he didn’t stay still anymore. This guy’s musical senses were definitely terrible. KangYoon gave light advice when he felt something strange. Just enough so that he wouldn’t scratch the other guy’s pride. It was his own way of respect.

Perhaps thanks to KangYoon’s advice, the recording speed got boosted. President Lee WooSung didn’t seem to like listening to KangYoon, but he didn’t just ignore them either. He didn’t hide his displeasure, but it wasn’t like he could simply ignore KangYoon’s opinions. This was the power of the original composer.

Like that, the 1st verse ended and rest came.

President Lee WooSung left for a smoke, and KangYoon sat down for a little. He felt quite tired after standing throughout the entire recording session.

However, a lady approached him, it was Kim SeSol.

“Excuse me, composer.”

“What is it?”

As they weren’t that close yet, Kim SeSol didn’t call him by name. Kim SeSol carefully spoke to KangYoon.

(T/N: If you haven’t noticed already, in Korea, it’s ‘polite’ to refer to people with their titles. It’s like saying ‘sir’)

“I have a question. I’m doing the chorus for the 2nd verse, but I can’t think of how I should sing that part.”

“Oh, really? What do you think you should do ,then?”

“Me? Well....”

Kim SeSol spoke after a moment of thought.

“First, this is a retro-style song and a bright one, and it still has to be different from the first verse.... But JungHyun gave it power in the first verse. So that’s why I’m worried about the 2nd verse. I don’t have as loud of a voice as JungHyun.

Kim SeSol sighed in worry. Kim SeSol and Joo JungHyun were the two main vocals of the team. But Joo JungHyun had a stronger vocal power.

KangYoon picked up a note and a pen before speaking while writing some things down.

“Well, in my opinion, we should record from scratch with Miss JungHyun, but that’s the president’s right, so I can’t help that. Since this is the case, why don’t we try something different?”

“Something different?”

“If the first verse was powerful, we should add some characteristics for the second one. We’ll add some effects to the voice to give it a different feeling. Your voice is more suited to adding effects so I think that would be good.”

“Ah, okay!”

Kim SeSol seemed to be relieved of her worries as she left with a smile.

The resting time ended, and recording session began again.

Thanks to KangYoon’s advices, the recording went smoothly. He could see President Lee WooSung getting tired of it, but he did not stop. If the light from the song shook even a little, KangYoon spoke without hesitation.

“SeSol, it’s your turn.”

When the recording progressed like that, Kim SeSol’s turn came. She went into the booth and grabbed the mic.

– If you know how I feel – tell me – lululu –

Kim SeSol’s song ended, and President Lee WooSung spoke into the microphone.

“SeSol, it’s a little bit weak.”

– Should I add some more power?

At that time, KangYoon spoke up.

“The first verse was powerful already. Wouldn’t it be rather repetitive to go with powerful for the 2nd verse as well? She has a good tone of voice. I think it would be better to just mix it.”

“Ehem. Is that so?”

“Yes. Miss SeSol’s vocal power might be lacking compared to Miss JungHyun, but her tone is clear if we mix it well and edit it later, I think we’ll have a good melody.”

“... If you say so.”

President Lee WooSung nodded with a displeased expression. And as KangYoon had said, he added a few effects before resuming.

– If you know how I feel –

“!!!”

President Lee WooSung was extremely surprised. He didn’t even add that many effects, but the feeling was drastically different from the 1st verse. The melody was now a lot easier – he could feel that.

“Huh....”

He couldn’t deny it anymore. This was the real deal. Without speaking anything, he replayed the recording back into the studio and the booth.

“Wow....”

After hearing it, the members of TNT widened their eyes. Even the owner of the voice, Kim SeSol doubted whether this was her

voice or not. It felt like it stuck to the mind a lot easier and made them feel that they wanted to listen to more.

“Thank you, composer!”

President Lee WooSung bowed towards KangYoon from the bottom of his heart. KangYoon only shrugged his shoulders.

Midnight between Friday and Saturday.

The members of TNT, who had just finished their debut at a TV station, were gathered around a computer.

“Hey hey, is it there yet?”

When Jin SeAh asked, Kim HyoRin told her to look at the lock. Jin SeAh pouted saying that she couldn't help it.

“It's here!”

Around 5 minutes after midnight, the song ‘Good Feelings’ appeared at the bottom. The ranking was 98, rock bottom.

“Hey hey! Play it, now!”

To raise the rankings, the members all played the song on all the devices they had: computers, their phones, etc.

“We should have bought more computers.”

“Where do we have the money to?”

Lee Min replied to Joo JungHyun's words, and the rest of the members were all talking about the rise and fall in the rankings.

Like that, 1, 2, 4 a.m.

Everyone couldn't fall asleep.

“Dammit, it sure isn't rising. Maybe because it's the night.”

Complained Kim SeSol. The current ranking was 91.

“Did we get too excited? Let's sleep since we have a schedule tomorrow.”

Eventually, everyone went to their rooms and slept under the leader Kim HyoRin's words. Wishing that their rankings would have rose when they woke up.

And the next day.

"...What the."

When Lee Min checked the first thin in the morning, it was at 88th place.

"Other singers get 1st as soon as they release, too."

"Are we those singers?"

"Just saying...."

When Joo JungHyun expressed her disappointment, Jin SeAh added. Everyone felt rather disappointed.

And a few days later.

Although they checked frequently while running events, but the rankings only went up to the 60s. The members were all slightly happy at the better results than before. However, they were disappointed as well as they thought that they would go up to the 40s at least.

"Haa... so it's an ordinary one this time?"

Kim SeSol, who was checking for the comments on her phone in the van, sighed. Although none of the others said anything, they felt no different from her.

A week passed since the release.

Kim HyoRin woke up first as always and stretched her body before washing her face. As always, she started the day with checking the rankings of the song on the computer.

However....

"Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek?!"

She, who was always calm as the leader, screamed after looking at the computer screen.

Chapter 85. Three Years Later, a New Beginning (5)

“Unni, what is it!?”

Jin SeAh was surprised by the scream from the living room and rushed out. The other members all rushed out to the living room after hearing their leader, who was normally very calm, scream.

“Unni, what happened?”

“N.... n.... num...”

“Num?”

Kim HyoRin only pointed at the screen with shaking hands, so no one understood anything.

Jin SeAh looked at the computer.

– 07 ↑47 Good Feelings | T&T

“WHAT!!!!!!”

Everyone gasped. They jumped 47 places and were now placed in the top 10. This....

“What, the hell is this!”

Even Lee Min, who was rarely surprised, gaped her jaws in shock. It was needless to say that the other members were equally as shocked.

“Call the president immediately!”

Among everyone’s excitement, Min HyoRin called President Lee WooSung with her phone.

“The top 10, huh? That’s quite high.”

Lee HyunJi, who was monitoring it, couldn’t hide her surprise.

“Really?”

KangYoon only smiled lightly while drinking the coffee Jung HyeJin gave him.

“Looking at you, I feel like you saw this coming.”

“Really?”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders. Then, he spoke on after sipping the coffee.

“The producing side of Laurel was a bit of a pity. If that was better than the reaction would have been better as well.”

“Well, we can’t help it since his skills are only subpar. It seems like your advice played a big role. But rather than that, the choreography is quite good. Their accents are on point.”

“The leader has good senses, as well as experience. She’s quite the unlucky fella.”

After watching the music video, KangYoon was surprised by Kim HyoRin’s dance. He even felt that she was lowering her skills intentionally to match the rest of the team.

The fact that the song was in the top 10 meant that the public would know about the group. After all, many people from all over the country must listen to the song for the rankings to go up.

“So, it’s about time we did the next thing.”

“Yes. Now there’s only the receiving part left.”

President Lee HyunJi laughed at KangYoon’s words.

“You know what, the more I look at you, the more I think you act on practical benefits. You should have had a hard time dealing with that old ass Lee WooSung, too. Did you know that it will come to this?”

“Maybe. He probably didn’t know that our song would go so well when we signed the contract. Well, he tried to abandon the music with all sorts of excuses, so he probably accepted such a contract.”

“He’s a fool alright.”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders while thinking about the contents of the contract.

Once in the top 10, a percentage of all profits gained from the song must be paid to the composer. Instead, the cost of rights to use the song was lowered. Thanks to that, President Lee HyunJi could get him to sign the contract easily. President Lee WooSung tried to abandon the song with various excuses, but he could not think of one, and things eventually lead to this.

“Pffft, well then. I’m off to collect some money.”

“Watch your words, there.”

Seeing Lee HyunJi speak like a loan shark, KangYoon jokingly warned her. However, he also felt relaxed after enduring it for such a long time.

‘Was the audition programme this week?’

KangYoon called the number he got from Lee HyunJi. A producer of the programmer answered the call and notified KangYoon of the schedule. When he asked if there was anything to prepare, he was replied that only himself needed to be there. Also, he was warned that he may be physically fatigued as there would be a lot of people.

“...Okay.”

– Before the shoot, there will be an interview with the writer of the programme. Is there anything else you need?

KangYoon asked him that he would be represented as a CEO of a company. He was doing this to advertise the company after all. The producer gave a positive reply.

After the call, KangYoon downloaded the audition programme videos that took place until now and watched them.

‘There are a lot of styles.’

From judges that blatantly shouted at the candidates, to those that praised but gave them a fail as well as judges that silently did their markings; there were a lot of styles. The most eye-catching one was without a doubt the one that shouted and drove the candidates to the bottom. However, they had their charms as well: they said that it was to motivate them to do better. This kind of style grabbed attention and produced some news articles as well.

‘So, all in all, it’s a TV programme.’

It was an audition, but at the same time, it was a TV programme. After everything that’s said and done, it was done to grab viewers at home. So, the judges were writing dramas in various styles. Even KangYoon thought that he might do that as well.

When he was thinking, he got a call. It was from Lee HyunJi. She spoke of her matter immediately.

– Everything went as the contract stated. We’ll receive the money by today.

“Thank you for your work. You must have had a hard time.”

– Not really. Oh, President Lee WooSung wishes to call you, should I hand it to him?

When KangYoon gave the okay, the caller switched.

– Composer, I’m Lee WooSung.

“Yes, President. Congratulations to you.”

– Thank you. Thanks to you, the results were good. I thank you again.

Good greetings were exchanged. President Lee WooSung didn’t have that complaining tone anymore.

“Not at all. Thanks for your hard work as well.”

– Not at all, no. It’s all thanks to you.

That attitude. There was definitely something he wanted from

this. Probably something like lowering the contract conditions. KangYoon knew that well. Of course, he wasn't going to do that.

“Oh, I must apologize, I have a different call. I'll call you next time.”

– Composer, com....

KangYoon ended the call. He waited to see if he called back, but there were no calls.

“You deserved that.”

The superior position in this contract was flipped.

“...I apologize. I don't think I can go there alone.”

Lee HyunAh voiced her thoughts to the scouter of Yerang entertainment.

“I wished that we could have a better relationship... but okay. Let us meet next time if fate allows us to.”

The scouter from Yerang entertainment gave Lee HyunAh a business card while expressing disappointment. Lee HyunAh received the business card and put it in her bag.

“Man. Maybe I'm missing an opportunity because of that oppa.”

Left alone inside the café, Lee HyunAh drank the rest of the Americano and grumbled. However, her expression looked as though she was relieved.

“Well, then. I'm not so busy anymore so let's go hit him in the chest.”

Having drunk the coffee, Lee HyunAh was about to leave through the front door. However....

“Excuse me, miss....

“Sorry? Is something wrong?”

“You haven’t paid.”

“Sorry? Didn’t the woman that just left pay?”

“She only paid for one person.”

“.....”

Lee HyunAh felt absurd after seeing the meticulous ‘going dutch’ (individual pays for himself/herself) from the businesswoman that seem to imply that their fate ended there.

– Wow!! Oppa, what is all this money?

HeeYoon called KangYoon after seeing so much money in the bank account.

“What do you mean? This is all the profit from the song this time. I’m not sure about the cost of rights to use the music, but I got loads from the extras.”

– You’re one capable man.

“I must get the proper payment for a good song. Eat some nice things with that money.”

– Okay.

KangYoon was delighted to give HeeYoon so much pocket money. To be exact, he was planning to give HeeYoon all the composer rights, but HeeYoon left the money with KangYoon saying that he should use it for managing the company. KangYoon was proud to see her sister’s growth over these years.

After telling her to beware of boys, KangYoon ended the call and stood up. Today’s was the filming day of Korea ONE STAR. KangYoon headed to SBB TV station in Seoul.

“Hello.”

“Hello.”

KangYoon headed inside the station with the assistant director

that came out to meet him. He leads KangYoon to the makeup room. He had his hair done and put on some light makeup.

‘This feels awkward.’

Although he visited TV stations many times, this was the first time he would be appearing on any programme. Although it was a special guest appearance, he felt very fresh.

It took around 30 minutes for the stages to be set up. KangYoon headed to the waiting room. Today, veteran singer Lee JaeHyuk and composer Moon SangJae were there. KangYoon greeted them and got ready.

One of the programmer writers entered and they started an interview. He asked about their standards for their judgment today as well as their preferred genre of singers. KangYoon was interviewed last.

“What kind of candidates are you planning to pick?”

When he was asked that, KangYoon answered after a little bit of thought.

“I wish to pick a candidate that has a unique trait as well as skills.”

“Do you have any candidates that you have your eyes on?”

“Hmm....”

He didn’t specifically have one, so he shook his head.

After the light interview, the judges took their seats. The audition started like that.

Although this was the 2nd round of auditions, there were still a lot of candidates. Although each of them got less than 5 minutes’ worth of time, the endless numbers of candidates exhausted the judges.

“My heart – to the sky— “

“Wait wait. Did you not have breakfast today? You sound too powerless.”

“S.... sorry.”

“This is an audition. Try again.”

Singer Lee JaeHyuk was like a roaring tiger towards the applicants. Sitting in the center, he glared at the applicants through his sunglasses. Moon SangJae supported his words as he branched off the candidates.

KangYoon was also judging the people coming on stage. He was looking at the light emitted by them while saying some comments. However, there was a problem.

‘Why is everyone so stuffy?’

It was grey light everywhere. Not only that, KangYoon was now more influenced by the musical lights. It was hard to endure this audition venue that was filled with grey light. He tried his best to endure by drinking lots of water. However, the stuffy feeling did not go away so easily.

They continued the audition without even eating.

“Number 701 entering.”

With the assistant director’s notification, a girl clad in school uniform entered with a guitar.

“Hello. My name is Kim JiMin. I’m 17 and I currently go to XX Girl’s High. Please take care of me.”

All the judges were fixated on the guitar behind the girl’s back. The first one to ask was Lee JaeHyuk.

“So, you play the guitar?”

“Yes. I liked playing it since I was young.”

“Really? Hmm.”

He seemed to be interested and urged her to play. Then, the girl

started playing on the seat that was prepared for her. At that time, Lee JaeHyuk coldly spoke.

“Wait, aren’t you going to tune it?”

“Ah, I forgot. Tuning.... Tuning....”

Nervousness made her forgot about the most important thing. Kim JiMin finally took out the tuner from her bag but there was no way the judges would wait for that.

“...Forget the guitar. What have you prepared for us today?”

“A song called ‘Romance’.”

“Oho. That’s a hard one. Go ahead, then.”

The song ‘Romance’ was a high-pitched song sung by a veteran female singer. Lee JaeHyuk’s eyes shined in interest. KangYoon was the same. Kim JiMin did a light vocal exercise and started singing.

“The romance I dream of – “

Quiet and soft – Kim JiMin’s voice rang out. Lee JaeHyuk and Moon SangJae closed their eyes and admired her song.

‘Strong.’

KangYoon was surprised. The white light from the purple notes was getting stronger as the song progressed. Lee JaeHyuk and Moon SangJae were humming under its influence.

However...

“Go—slowly—roman...”

Due to her nervousness, she messed up a tone. Thanks to that, Lee JaeHyuk and Moon SangJae’s eyes abruptly opened, Kim JiMin ended up stopping there as she was surprised by their reactions.

“Ah....”

“Hm.”

Lee JaeHyuk and Moon SangJae shook their heads in disappointment. Her voice was very good, but it felt as though she was lacking something. Lee JaeHyuk started his evaluation first.

“Your voice is very good.”

“Thank you.”

“But you’re too nervous. You must learn to relax a little bit more. And right now, only your voice is good. Come again after you get used to this kind of stage. For me....”

He pressed X. It was a fail.

“Ah....”

Kim JiMin lowered her head. There were two votes left.

“I’m not that much different from Mr. Lee JaeHyuk’s. You have a good voice, but I wish you could practice some more before you come again.”

Moon SangJae pressed X as well. 2 out of 3 gave an X. This was a fail.

“...Thank you. I wish I can see you again at this place next time.”

Without even looking at KangYoon’s result, Kim JiMin left.

“Looks like she was disheartened.”

“It’s a pity. Her voice was really good.”

Lee JaeHyuk and Moon SangJae talked about Kim JiMin. Her voice was good, but it was too early for her to get a pass. This was their opinion.

However, KangYoon was different.

‘If she relaxed a little more, she would be really good. Looks like I’ll have to see her again.’

Just the voice was good? Not in KangYoon’s opinion, no. Among the trainees KangYoon saw, there were rarely any that could produce such a clear white light. He stood up from his seat as

though something tugged his mind.

“Can we have a little rest?”

“Hmm.... Should we? I’m hungry too.”

When Lee JaeHyuk agreed to KangYoon’s request for a rest, the programme was paused. KangYoon immediately left and looked for Kim JiMin.

‘Where is she?’

However, she wasn’t in the lobby. When he asked a staff in the lobby, he got the reply that a girl with a guitar had just left the lobby, and he ran out.

Fortunately, he could see the girl not far away from the building. KangYoon ran.

“Wait!”

“Eh?”

The girl turned around at KangYoon’s call.

“Sir judge?”

“pant pant....”

Looking at the girl’s confused expression, KangYoon made a bright face.

“Fuu, I was looking for you.”

“For me?”

The girl, Kim JiMin, looked at KangYoon with very confused eyes.

Chapter 86. The Princess of World (1)

“Please, sit comfortably.”

KangYoon offered a seat to Kim JiMin on one of the benches. When she sat, KangYoon bought a canned coffee from a vending machine and held it out to her.

“Thank you.”

Kim JiMin expressed her thanks to KangYoon receiving the hot coffee. Although it was spring, warmth was still precious as the winds were still cold outside. KangYoon spoke of his mind while warming his hands up with the coffee.

“I found it slightly disappointing that I couldn’t listen to your song for long enough.”

“What?”

Kim JiMin suddenly panicked due to the unexpected words.

“You didn’t even see my results and just left.”

“That’s....”

Regardless of KangYoon’s results, there was no next time. If she stayed here any longer then it would just become a more painful injury. So, she didn’t want to stay there. But this guy, he was quite strange.

“I thought differently to the two people.”

“...I failed anyway. There’s no use in staying here any longer.”

Kim JiMin was feeling down. She had gone to several auditions. However, the taste of failure was just as bitter as the first time.

“You may have failed the audition, but it might be an opportunity for me.”

“What?”

KangYoon took out a small card and handed it to Kim JiMin.

It was a business card.

“World... Entertainment, Lee KangYoon? You were a CEO?”

“If you have any thoughts, then come for an audition later. There’s my contact number as well as the address, so you can just use those.”

KangYoon stood up right away. He had to go inside for the filming.

“W, wait!”

Kim JiMin grabbed him.

“What is it?”

“This, uh... so....”

Kim JiMin was confused. She felt as though she received salvation from the depths of the abyss. It was hard to express her feelings of having been chosen after being abandoned for so long. Although she saw this person for the first time today, the fact that he was an audition judge added credibility to his words.

“You should have school too, so come around this Saturday. 2 pm should be good. As for the song, come with anything you’re comfortable with. It’s fine if you make mistakes like today, so relax and don’t get too nervous about it. You’ll be showing me a lot of things then.”

“Yes! I’ll definitely be there!”

Kim JiMin shouted with hope as KangYoon turned around. This was the first person that acknowledged her.

“Oops, I’m late.”

KangYoon left Kim JiMin and headed to the studio.

“World Entertainment? Well, whether it’s big or small.... I’m okay with it!”

She gripped her fists. She resolved to herself that she would

definitely pass this time.

T&T were on a roll with their title song, 'Good Feelings', by the day.

Ranked 7th on one website was just the beginning. Various other music websites also ranked them as 6th and 8th. On top of that, they became more popular with various events. They became a hot potato on social networks as well. As people started talking about them, articles about them started rising, and eventually, they were called by a TV station.

"...Where are we going again?"

"Shooting, duh."

"...You think I don't know? I'm just emotional."

Lee Min stiffly replied to Joo JungHyun's words. The two quarreled for quite a while.

During their 2 years of activity, never have they appeared on a weekend 7 pm programme, and with all 5 of them together, and now, they did. In the flood of girl group idols, it was an amazing feat to appear on a weekend evening program. Especially for groups like them who were usually bottom-of-the-rung.

"Sob...."

"HyoRin-unni's crying again."

Jin SeAh teased the emotional Kim HyoRin. Then, she denied it and the two started quarreling as well.

With the song turning out good, everyone was happy. Although they were busy, their hearts were filled with joy.

"But the President's expression wasn't that good...."

Kim SeSol muttered as though she remembered something."

"Apparently, he used too much money on the song. That's why

he doesn't look good nowadays.”

“Oh, really? But isn't becoming popular a good thing?”

Kim SeSol was still confused with Joo JungHyun's reply. Then, Kim HyoRin wiped her face and answered.

“I heard from the secretary-unni, and apparently, they had to pay a lot of money this time. The president even had to use his emergency funds.”

“Even the emergency funds?”

“Yeah, apparently, it was something about the contract. I don't know the details either. Well, we just need to run a lot of events and earn a lot of money, don't we?”

“Yup yup.”

Everyone replied in unison to Kim HyoRin's words.

Their president had long since lost their trust, so whatever happened to him was out of their interest.

“An audition?”

Lee HyunJi doubted her ears. During the past few days, she was rarely at the office because of business matters, and now that she came, she heard a surprising news from KangYoon.

“There will be an applicant in the afternoon. Come observe with me.”

“Okay, if it's someone who caught your eye, then I'm curious.”

Lee HyunJi became interested. She already knew that KangYoon had good eyes for people as well as songs. However, while he was at MG, he only had to face a select few that were already selected through an audition. She was interested to see what kind of gem KangYoon had found from seeing all the people and not a select few, filtered set of people.

After eating with Lee HyunJi, it was 1 pm. KangYoon brushed his teeth and headed to the basement floor for the audition. There was a small studio in the basement floor. He turned on the lights and turned on the power.

“Perhaps I shouldn’t have bought them used.”

Grumbled KangYoon as he saw the mixers and speakers. Although he wanted good equipment, the funds were insufficient, so he bought them second-hand. Thanks to that, he was able to get cheap and good quality equipment, but the feeling of disappointment remained inside him.

Normally, auditions are supposed to be done without any gear, but KangYoon was planning to do various tests today. For this, he had to prepare various instruments and set up the mic as well.

When he was just about done, the doors to the studio opened.

“Director, what is it- “

“LEE KANGYOON!!”

However, ‘something’ charged towards him. And then a heavy pain struck KangYoon’s body.

“Urgh!”

It was a strong body slam. With a shout, KangYoon was about to fall over, but he barely held on.

“What the!? Huh? HyunAh?”

“...Dammit, I thought you were just tall and had no power, but you are quite strong. I was planning to knock you over. And anyway, it’s been a while, hasn’t it?”

Long hair that reached her shoulders, cute appearance as well as a tall stature. It was Lee HyunAh. Behind her were Lee HyunJi and the band that she belonged to, ‘The Formidables’.

“What is this?”

“Revenge.”

“Huh?”

KangYoon was confused. Never did he imagine that he would get body-slammed like this.

“...Well, I’ll let you go for now.”

“.....”

Lee HyunAh spoke curtly and put her hand out.

“Hello, oppa. It’s been a while.”

“Y... yeah. But you... are quite weighty.”

“Are you picking a fight?”

Although he was ambushed, KangYoon didn’t lose out at all in words.

After a joyful reunion, everyone sat down around the sofa in the studio. They talked about what happened recently. When they were talking, Jung HyeJin entered through the door. Behind her was Kim JiMin who was still wearing a school uniform.

“Welcome.”

“Hello?”

Kim JiMin gasped at the studio as well as the people inside it. KangYoon offered her a seat as she was looking around.

KangYoon told Lee HyunAh that they should talk later and turned around to Kim JiMin.

“Have you prepared?”

“I did as much as possible.”

“Really? Then should we see?”

When Kim JiMin was about to take out her guitar, KangYoon gestured her not to.

“Let’s try singing first. We have a lot to try out today. Don’t be in

a rush and just calm down; Okay?”

“Yes.”

In the previous auditions she had been to, she was allocated 3 minutes to 5 minutes at best. However, this person was a little different. Even while being confused, she exercised her voice and got ready to sing.

Then she closed her eyes and started making a half-whisper sound.

“– cause you – hold me— “

Kim JiMin’s voice was very clear when it was small and had a slight whisper-like effect on it when it was loud. And that had a charm to it. Moreover, she had a good vocal power. A pure voice, that did not go through any sort of tampering started to fill the studio.

‘This is it.’

The yellow note that came out of her was very distinct. White light was obvious. After listening to around a minute, KangYoon told her to stop.

“Stop.”

When Kim JiMin stopped, her eyes were filled with worry. KangYoon wordlessly pointed towards the guitar. Then, she took out the guitar. When she was about to sing, KangYoon spoke again.

“Can you sing the same song?”

“Sorry? Oh, okay.”

She didn’t know the reason for it, but she still proceeded to play the guitar. When she played the guitar, the blue notes from the guitar and the yellow notes from the voice inter-mixed and started making white light. However, the light was weaker than before.

‘Looks like her guitar skills need some working.’

When she did the two together, she lost focus on one thing. The blue notes were fainter than the yellow ones. In KangYoon's eyes, the effects of the guitar did not compliment the voice.

KangYoon made her stop after the first verse again.

“This time, let's do it in there.”

KangYoon pointed towards the studio booth. Then, Kim JiMin headed inside with nervousness.

‘Wow, KangYoon-oppa is being meticulous.’

Whispered Lee HyunAh from the back. Lee HyunJi added in.

‘She's the first trainee candidate, so yeah.’

‘The first? Oh....’

Hearing those words, Lee HyunAh started observing carefully again.

KangYoon had no idea what was happening back there, so he turned on the mixer and set the microphone to the standard settings and told Kim JiMin to connect the guitar to the line input. The line input was connected, and her voice started ringing out the studio along with the guitar.

“Can you try the same song again?”

After they were ready, Kim JiMin started singing on KangYoon's signal. The speakers started producing musical notes as well as white light. However, the light was stronger than last time.

‘The sound quality becomes better through the microphone. Now, that's something innate.’

KangYoon was ensured. His eyes weren't wrong.

Kim JiMin thought that they would end on the first verse as well this time, but KangYoon gestured her to continue. Then, she sang all the way to the end and exited the booth after leaving the guitar to the side.

“Well done.”

“Fuah.”

This was the first time she sang inside a booth. Although it was nerve-wracking, it was also fun. Seeing Kim JiMin’s lively expression, KangYoon also smiled.

“Well, then. Welcome to World Entertainment.”

“Yes, President.”

“Pfft, just call me sir.”

“Okay.”

No more words were necessary. KangYoon noticed Kim JiMin’s talents, and Kim JiMin grabbed KangYoon’s hands.

Like that, she became the first trainee of World Entertainment.

Kim JiMin greeted with Lee HyunJi as well as the families of World Entertainment. KangYoon told them to treat her well as she would be the new addition to the family. Lee HyunJi said that that was natural as she approached her, and Jung HyeJin told KangYoon to relax as she would treat her well, saying that Kim JiMin looked cute in her uniform.

‘Did I just give fish to a cat?’

KangYoon sweated cold sweat at their dangerous(?) words.

“Miss JiMin. Then should we go somewhere else?”

Lee HyunJi headed to the office with Kim JiMin to talk about the contract. Left inside the studio were KangYoon, Lee HyunAh as well as the rest of the band.

“She sings quite well.”

“This is just the start. She’s a source stone that needs polishing.”

KangYoon shook his head at Lee HyunAh’s words. In his view,

this was just the start. He was planning to polish her well before her debut.

KangYoon cleaned up the studio, he turned off the power and cleaned up the cables. Lee HyunAh approached him as he did so. She was now about to speak to him about the real reason why she was here. KangYoon stretched out his back while cleaning the cables.

“Oppa, can you accept us too?”

“The entire band?”

“...Yes.”

Seeing Lee HyunAh carefully speaking about it, KangYoon quietly put down the cables. He did foresee this from the moment she stayed here during the audition. KangYoon felt that the talk was going to be long and asked all of them to sit down.

“I’ve heard that you were contacted by Yerang last time.”

“I’ve refused that for sure. I don’t want to be separated from my team.”

Lee HyunAh’s opinion was firm. The rest of the team seemed to feel sorry, as they had complicated expressions. KangYoon looked around at everyone and spoke calmly.

“Is there a reason you want to come here?”

“There’s that we’re close to you, oppa... but it’s more so to do with the fact that you were famous at MG, I guess.”

“I’m famous?”

“You’re the planner for Eddios, aren’t you?”

Lee HyunAh had found out about that as well. While KangYoon was shrugging his shoulders, she went into the topic.

“Oppa, please accept us.”

Not only her, KangYoon could feel desperation from all the

members. However, KangYoon couldn't nod his head so easily. It was very hard to succeed as a band in Korea. He couldn't just accept them just because he knew them.

“Do you know why bands are hard to succeed?”

“No.”

There was no way Lee HyunAh would no details like that. KangYoon calmly explained.

“These days, the major source of income for singers is not from selling songs. It's events. For example, let's say you earn 10 million won (10,000 USD) every time you go to an event, and there's another singer for the same price. To call you, however, the event manager would have to take care of instrument loans as well as the price to all you. Wouldn't it be much better to call the other option instead?”

“.....”

“If this was overseas, then it might work. However, we live in Korea, and in Korea, we need a strategy that fits Korea. There's a reason why Yerang wanted to scout you alone.”

Lee HyunAh had nothing to say. Being told the logical reason made her run out of any reasons. He was right, but she was still very sad to hear that from him since this was their first meeting in 3 years.

‘Though it might be difficult, if they do succeed, it would be a huge jackpot...’

KangYoon fell into thought as he looked at Lee HyunAh.

Chapter 87. The Princess of World (2)

Although it was Saturday evening, KangYoon and Lee HyunJi remained at the company without going home. The importance of an employee was different to that of an employer. Jung HyeJin had already gone home, but these two still had some things to do regarding the contract with Kim JiMin.

Drinking bitter coffee, KangYoon turned his eyes to the papers.

“She lives with just her grandmother?”

KangYoon couldn't hide his surprise after hearing about Kim JiMin's family situation from Lee HyunJi. Looking at her address, he saw that it wasn't far from where he used to live. KangYoon was speechless.

“That place... they even share the toilets....”

“What? Such a place still exists?”

“It's just around the corner of where I used to live. There aren't many toilets, so they are practically shared. I didn't know people still lived there....”

“...I'm more surprised by the fact that you used to live there.”

“Now that I think about it, it hasn't been that long since I started getting hot tap water.”

Lee HyunJi was surprised at KangYoon instead. She did once see KangYoon's resume, but she didn't know that he went through all sort of suffering in a place like that.

KangYoon thought that Kim JiMin had to have a stable lifestyle first. Although more hunger calls for more desperation and better quality, that didn't work in an era like this. However, there was a problem; money.

“...We can get a small house. It will be better than a shack like that one.”

Fortunately, Lee HyunJi's answer was a positive one. She also thought that their first trainee shouldn't stay in a shack like that. However, there was a problem.

"I'm not worried about the money since you'll earn it back, but this won't be a vain investment, right?"

Her worries lay with Kim JiMin. Although they got a proper trainee, the matters of the world were mysterious.

KangYoon agreed with her worries but still calmed her down by saying that he would make it happen.

"I'll have to do my best. Now, we'll be family."

"That's true. You always moved for a just cause like that. It's not just one or two people that fell for that charm of yours."

"Hahaha."

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders.

Eventually, the two came to an agreement that they should get Kim JiMin a dorm where she could live with her grandmother. They also decided that she should practice everyday after school, Lee HyunJi went off to look for trainers, and KangYoon agreed.

Like that, matters about Kim JiMin were finished. Next was Lee HyunAh.

"...Lee HyunAh? Here?"

Hearing that from KangYoon, Lee HyunJi crossed her arms. Is a band easy to succeed with? Her opinion was that it was very hard.

"What did you reply with?"

"I said that I will think about it. A band is a very hard item to succeed with. I can't just accept them on behalf of friendship."

"She must have been disappointed. She might have thought that you were a high-pass."

"Work is work."

Lee HyunJi nodded at KangYoon's words. Running a company wasn't a joke. Accepting an entire group on behalf of friendship was a hard thing to do.

"In your opinion, do you think Lee HyunAh and her band have a chance to succeed?"

KangYoon didn't voice out his opinions that easily. Lee HyunAh definitely had her own charms. She was going beyond the 'Hongdae goddess' position in the indie band world. Moreover, she could even write songs as well. As an individual, she was a very talented singer-songwriter. The problem was the band. Can the individuals of the band succeed as a star? Can they succeed as a band in the major world?

Considering all that, it was hard for KangYoon to come to a decision. Lee HyunJi also seemed to notice his worries and added.

"A band is definitely difficult. A lot of people came out as a band in the past and screwed up. Moreover, they are of mixed gender, so it will be hard to gain fans."

KangYoon agreed with her. However, there was something that tugged his heart.

'A band, huh... a band, in the end, gains profit through performances...'

He could just give up on them. But something just didn't seem right.

KangYoon's worries didn't settle.

Kim JiMin felt that everything was a dream.

Lee HyunJi came to her school and processed documents about early leave for every day as she would become a trainee. As this all had the agreement of her guardian and had legitimate documents about her from the company, the school allowed it without much

hassle. Though, they found it slightly disappointing since it was a small company.

“JiMin! Did you really become a trainee? That’s awesome!”

“My friend is a celebrity now?”

When rumors spread, Kim JiMin became a hot issue among the students. Despite that, she maintained good relationships with her friends.

The next change that came to her was the dorms. Kim JiMin had lived in shacks for all her life and was not able to believe the two-room studio apartment in front of her eyes.

“...Wow....”

It wasn’t that big, but it was very neat and tidy. Everything felt as though it was a dream. There was everything necessary with beds and a computer.

“My dear, president. I cannot thank you enough.”

Kim JiMin’s parents grabbed KangYoon’s hands dearly. She did hear that her granddaughter had become a trainee or something, but she never imagined that she got her a house as well. KangYoon also grabbed her hands back.

“JiMin will bring you to a better place in the future. She’ll give us with greater things, so this is not much.”

“Thank you, thank you so much.”

Kim JiMin’s grandmother was just thankful.

With the matters with the school and living done, they took care of most things. What was left was training. And today was the historic first training.

“Hello.”

Kim JiMin finished just the morning classes and headed to World Entertainment. She greeted Jung HyeJin and headed to the

basement studio.

“Welcome.”

In the studio were KangYoon and professor Choi ChanYang. Kim JiMin nervously greeted towards the professor.

After a brief introduction, the three sat down and went to the topic.

“JiMin, the professor will take care of your vocal training starting today. You have a lot to learn, but singing is the basics of the basics, so you must work hard, okay?”

“Yes. I’ll do my best.”

Kim JiMin’s eyes were full of enthusiasm. Professor Choi ChanYang smiled in satisfaction.

“No, take care of me too. This will be the first time I train someone too.”

Kim JiMin’s eyes trembled, but KangYoon explained.

“He’s a professor in Hallyeo Arts University. It’s the first time he’s doing vocal training, but he teaches composing. This opportunity is quite rare. Also, the vocal skills you’re about to learn can’t be learned from just anywhere so do your best.”

“A pro...fessor... hiㄷㅏ.”

Kim JiMin gulped in nervousness. Then, professor Choi ChanYang smiled and made her relax.

After she relaxed a little, KangYoon continued to explain.

“It’s called SLS vocal method, and it originated from vocal music, but it can handle pop or classic, as well as all other genres of singing.”

She wondered if there really was such a magical singing method, but trusted KangYoon. When her eyes sparkled, KangYoon continued.

“It’s hard to see effects for people who already learned another vocal method. But I thought that you should be able to learn it since you don’t have experience learning any other things. This is quite effective for people who don’t have habits in singing. Not anyone can teach it without the proper licenses. So, do your best to learn it.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon spoke no more. He pushed away the tables in the studio while Kim JiMin sat down.

“Here, do as I do. Ah~.”

“Ah—“

Professor Choi ChanYang started from the basics. Kim JiMin sang as she did normally. Then, the professor shook his head.

“Think as though you’re doing it more naturally. Listen to me. Aaah—“

KangYoon sat down and focused his ears on their voices. The professor repeated the same ‘ah’ sound. The prior sounded like a scratching sound, and the latter sounded more comfortable.

“What is the difference between the two?”

“I think the first one was more difficult to voice out. The second one sounded more comfortable.”

“Good. You have good ears.”

The compliment made Kim JiMin happy.

“That’s where the importance of SLS lies. Comfortably and clearly. If you perfectly digest this voicing method, then you’ll be able to voice out even the high notes.”

“Oh....”

Kim JiMin exclaimed. She didn’t even think about that.

“Let’s do it then. Aah—“

“Aaah—“

“The sound is still a little awkward right? It’s because your larynx is too low. The important thing is to find the right place for the larynx. Again. Aah—“

“Aaah—“

Kim JiMin’s vocal training started with the basics. Seeing that the lesson was taking off, KangYoon quietly left through the door.

In the office, Lee HyunJi was hard at work while grabbing her head. KangYoon sat down as to not interrupt her.

‘Band, what do I do with a band?’

The band problem was very difficult. How to produce profit out of them, this was a big question. Even if they acted as a unit, the problem of sharing profit was obviously a big hindrance. There was a reason Yerang wanted Lee HyunAh alone.

‘But no one has done it yet. The merit of being the first success is definitely there. Moreover, her skills are already approved. Increasing the number of performances and proper marketing should make her a good card.’

There was definitely merit if he could package the band well. Moreover, there was the foundation that she had piled up in Hongdae (Hongik University District). If the music could be turned a little more mass-public-oriented while maintaining the originality of the band, then a good reaction could be expected.

‘If I do decide to accept her, then the important part will be to produce a profit. But it’s not like HyunAh has talents in acting or TV shows, and there’s no way the others do either. In the end, it will be about music.... Music, music, huh. Music... Oh.’

At that moment, something flashed in KangYoon’s head.

The main source of income for a band is a concert. Lee HyunAh’s foundation is an indie band. Why did I only think about large-scale

concerts? Concerts with less than 100 people audience is still a concert. Hahaha.'

Thinking about it, Lee HyunAh was already earning money as an indie band. However, there was a difference between doing it through a company and doing it as an individual or a team. Moreover, he could also expect an increase in quality as she would be able to focus solely on music.

'With a band, I could earn profits through indie stages, and get popularity through TV shows. Once there are enough fans, a large concert to sweep it all? Like that, shouldn't there be quite a lot of profit, though, not as much as an event?'

He thought about a part he forgot about. These people weren't the typical celebrities. They were indie singers. The advantage of indie singers was that they had manias – die-hard fans. If he could provide a fan-service for these specific group of fans, and increase their numbers, then there would eventually be a frightening mass of fans. The profit too would be...

"That's it!"

KangYoon subconsciously shouted out loud. Lee HyunJi, who was focusing on her work on the side, was surprised and looked at him.

"Did something happen?"

"Oh...."

KangYoon momentarily became embarrassed.

To strike the iron while it was hot, KangYoon immediately called for Lee HyunAh. She quickly came to the office of World Entertainment upon call.

Drinking the coffee Jung HyeJin gave her, Lee HyunAh asked.

"What did you call me for?"

Lee HyunAh's question had both expectation and worry. Before, KangYoon did not give a proper answer. However, she still expected something from KangYoon, thinking that KangYoon would be different.

KangYoon started to talk.

"You wanted to enter our company, right? With the rest of the band."

"Yes."

"I have something to talk about that. The conditions will be very bad. Is that fine with you??"

Yes. There was hope in KangYoon's words. She sparkled eyes and nodded her head.

"Yes, yes! I knew it, you were...."

"Decide after you hear about everything. The terms aren't that good. You will be sacrificing a lot."

"Sacrificing?"

Lee HyunAh was confused by the negative word. However, she already considered not going to Yerang a sacrifice.

"That's fine. If I was worried about sacrifices, I would have gone to Yerang."

"Okay. Then I'll start with the most difficult part for you."

KangYoon talked about the distribution of profits. It was about Lee HyunAh's individual income. KangYoon said that she would have to share some of her own income with the rest of the members. At those words, her eyes widened.

"What, my money?"

"Of course, the income from other members will also be shared in the same ratio. However, reasonably speaking, your income will be the highest. Meaning, you will be making some losses."

When KangYoon talked about the money, she started hesitating as well. The reality concerning money and the thought of being together with the rest of the team was conflicting each other.

Lee HyunAh thought about it for a moment and eventually came to a decision.

“...Okay. Then if I sacrifice my portion of the income, then will I be accepted?”

Lee HyunAh threw a direct question. However, KangYoon still said that there were some things left.

“There’s still more. Decide after you hear about it. Honestly, if you enter, then I’d welcome you. This company is still in its initial stages, so rather than me doing something for you, you might feel like you have more family. So....”

“But it’s not like you’re going to abandon me, oppa.”

“Y.... yes, that’s true as well.”

“You’ll utilize the group somehow to produce income. If I come here, that is.”

She was right. She said that and urged KangYoon to speak properly.

“...I’ll clear it up for you. If you come here, you’ll be put through a lot of suffering. You might even earn less money for the time being than being indie. However...”

“However?”

Her eyes sparkled at this point.

“I can guarantee this. The number of performances you do will increase. But the real goal is....”

“Is?”

“10,000 people concert.”

Her eyes widened.

“10 thousand people!?”

Ten thousand may seem like not that of a great number, but it wasn't such an easy feat. Even she had a hard time believing whether this was possible or not. However, KangYoon continued to calmly explain.

“Your fans until now, and the fans you'll make through TV, your image you'll make in the future. In total, I'm thinking around 2 years. Our company will also have to get ready to digest such a large concert by then. I won't do something rude like asking you to spend your own money so don't worry about that.

“Oh.... Hahahaha.”

Lee HyunAh smiled awkwardly. Looking at the current state of the company, as well as her own popularity as a band, this did not make any sense. However, KangYoon was the one to say it. She didn't think that it was a lie. Moreover, if the entire band was going to be treated the same, then there was no need to talk anymore.

“I, I'll come here. The others will come too.”

“You'll be put through a lot of suffering. Like, a LOT. You might even resent met.”

“It's fine. It's fine. 10 thousand. Ten... thousand...”

She went absent-minded as though she was enchanted by the temptation of the large-scale concert. To a band, a large concert was like a dream.

Like that, Lee HyunAh's band, The Formidables, nested themselves in World.

“President, you didn't say a lot in the show.”

Today was the broadcasting date for the audition programme. Monitoring, Lee HyunJi jokingly complained to him.

“They said everything before me, so I had nothing else to say.”

“Pfft. You should have made up something. Look at Lee JaeHyuk, he’s making up all sorts of things. That applicant is really good too.”

Like what Lee HyunJi said, applicant number 209 had very cleaning singing, and his attitude was very good as well. However, Lee JaeHyuk kept asking him for more saying something was lacking. And that definitely made it through the editing. After that, Lee JaeHyuk said in the interview that he liked the applicant but thought that he could do better.

“Compared to the other two, you don’t appear that much. Perhaps because you aren’t that known yet.”

When Lee HyunJi jokingly said that, KangYoon shook his head.

“It was difficult to find a gem among the sand. There were people who had good voices, but it wasn’t that easy to find people with potential. I think that those two are just celebrities putting on a show.”

“Really? I think your standards are too high....”

“Maybe.”

KangYoon shrugged his shoulders. This was his first appearance, but he didn’t show that much of an impact, and he was slightly disappointed about that. However, there weren’t that many talented people either. Moreover, Kim JiMin was edited out, even though she was the true talent.

“Yes, hello? Oh, producer.”

While KangYoon monitored himself with a disinterested expression Lee HyunJi answered the call from a producer with a high-pitched voice. Reflecting her business attitude, she never stopped laughing and giggling while on the phone.

After the call, she sighed and spoke.

“President, we got a call from the producer of ONE STAR. It’s work.”

“Work?”

“Yes. He wanted you to do an arrangement of a song for one of the top 10.”

“Arrangement?”

“Yes, the costs will be handled by the TV station. You became quite popular with the rise of T&T, right? It’s about time you did something again.”

KangYoon accepted and smiled.

Chapter 88. The Legend of Resuscitation (1)

[Korea ONE STAR Jay Han, voted most likely to go first!]

Korea ONE STAR top 10 candidate, Jay Han (real name Han SangHo) became the focus of attention yesterday when he was chosen as the most likely to drop out in the public vote.

When the selection and training footage of the top 10 members was released in the episode broadcasted on the 25th, Jay Han received compliments and attention for both his good voice and charming looks. But he was subsequently told off by the judge Lee JaeHyuk because of his bad pronunciation and poor song selection and then received the lowest amount of points. The obvious worry on his face during the next few missions made the viewers unsettled.

In the vote on the popular social networking website, Twisser, held after the episode, Jay Han was voted as the most likely candidate to leave the show first...

“...Shit....” (T/N: Spoken in English)

Reading through the news article that was written in Korean, which he was slightly unfamiliar with, Jay Han gritted his teeth. He received a lot of attention once he was selected as one of the top 10, and his name started circulating around the internet. And then...

- Jay Han is all about his face lol
- His pronunciation is so awkward. It must be his face.
- I swear to god that it’s his face that got him selected. The song’s meh...

“Aaaack!”

Looking at the comments on the article as well as on Twisser, Jay

Han ended up screaming. A poll? Why are they making an article off that!

The mass media didn't have good feedback for him. He tried to contact the people he became close to through the joint training, but they should be practicing hard right now. He was completely alone.

“Motherfucker....” (T/N: Again, spoken in English.)

He spat out rough insults. It was hard to control his emotions.

Lee HyunJi was satisfied seeing KangYoon's confidence and spoke about the singer.

“His name is Jay Han. Korean name, Hang SangHo. Now, doesn't he look handsome?”

Lee HyunJi's eyes filled with bliss as she looked at the picture. Short hair, big eyes, and long legs. The man in the picture reminded her of a model. KangYoon shrugged his shoulders and spoke.

“He does look good. But he has the smallest support from the viewers. Voted as the most likely to drop out in the poll.... He sings well, but his pronunciations aren't that good. No matter how good his voice is, if the words don't get spoken properly, it's not much different from baby mumbling. But the singer doesn't sing English songs and is stubborn on doing Korean ones. It's like a little girl trying to put on makeup.”

“So the most important thing will be to go with an easier song.’

Lee HyunJi rested her chin on her hands. The stubbornness of a singer was one thing, but this guy was about to drop out. Perhaps this was the right situation to use the expression ‘not as good as he looks to be’.

The next day, KangYoon met up with Jay Han in the office. Jung

HyeJin and Lee HyunJi were screaming about how handsome he was, but KangYoon felt something different.

‘He doesn’t have a great expression. Did something happen to him?’

Was it nervousness prior to a stage? Or some other element of worry? Thinking about various things, KangYoon started talking with Jay Han. Jay Han played the song he wanted to sing on the next round from his phone.

“‘Below the Sky Without You’? Wouldn’t the lyrics be too hard?”

KangYoon shook his head while listening to the song. This song was written in 1999 and the lyrics were poetic. However, it was hard to express it as it had words that were hard to pronounce. As he knew that Jay Han had issues with his pronunciation, KangYoon didn’t want to recommend this.

However, Jay Han was firm in his decision.

“I like this song. I can express the traditional sentiments of Korea.”

Now that made KangYoon confused. Usually, people who were taught outside Korea have a hard time sympathizing with the illogical expressions of Korea. But this guy, he liked it instead....

However, KangYoon shook his head.

(T/N: Now, the translation is about to get reaaaaally janky since I can’t really ‘translate’ pronunciations. So, if you think ‘hey, that’s not a hard word to pronounce in English’, then it’s because I can’t translate those.)

“From the old folk tales – on the foggy windows – like the dust— You have to express it properly. Can you do it?”

“Yes.”

He straightened his shoulders in confidence. KangYoon could hear awkward words in his voice right now... but where is he

getting all this confidence from? He shook his head.

‘Looks like there’s a need to tell him the truth.’

“Okay then. We need to see how good you are; so, can you sing it once?”

KangYoon came to a decision and let Jay Han into the booth. Then, he prepared a track. When the track was ready, he spoke into the mic.

“Have you memorized the lyrics?”

– Yes.

“I’ve set the microphone so let’s try singing it.”

Along with his words, the music started playing. The instrumental part ended, and Jay Han’s singing started flowing out.

– From the ohd fohk tayles – on the foggee windows – like the dust – oh – you liive (leave) my heart-

“Pfft....”

KangYoon burst into laughter. He had such a charming voice, and the voice said that.... This felt really unbalanced. The two women behind KangYoon’s back also blinked several times at this reversal. Jay Han, who didn’t know what the reaction was like outside, sung with passion.

In the end, KangYoon stopped Jay after the first verse and let him out. He didn’t say anything and made him listen to the recording.

“Oh....”

The awkward song that was recorded just now played back in the studio. Jay Han also had ears. He wanted a hole to hide in after listening to that awkward song. Seeing the two women trying their best to hold back their laughter, he felt even more embarrassed. His gripped fists trembled like mad.

KangYoon gestured the two women to leave and spoke.

“Until now, you may have survived thanks to your voice and your looks, but if you keep doing this, I can’t help you.”

“.....”

Agreeing with KangYoon’s words, Jay Han nodded his head repeatedly. He came to himself and faced reality. And then, he resolved himself.

After that, the two started going through a list of songs to choose from.

After tasting defeat, Jay Han didn’t say anything to KangYoon. This recording incident was an insult to his life. He was angry about the news articles, but now that he learned the truth for himself, he wanted to hide in a hole somewhere. He also didn’t forget about KangYoon’s consideration of him when he sent the two women out.

“If you are going to go with a Korean song, I recommend something easier to sing.”

Jay Han accepted KangYoon’s offer. Monitoring through TV and monitoring the voice through the booth had a lot of differences.

Jay Han chose the song carefully. Since he only had one song in mind, it took longer to choose. He played all the music available in the studio including vinyl records, CDs, and MP3 files. However, it was hard to find the one he liked.

While Jay Han was going through the songs, KangYoon taught Kim JiMin at the back of the studio.

“...This is perfect 5th. If there’s a sharp (#) on the third?”

“Major?”

“Good, that’s the basics. You learn quick. Until now, you learned the guitar through imitating, but you must learn it using harmonics as the basis for the future, okay?”

“Yes.”

While learning harmonics from KangYoon, Kim JiMin drew on the blank music paper. Right now, she was immersed in the joy of learning something she had never had the chance to learn or only learned through looking.

While being taught theory by KangYoon, Kim JiMin asked.

“Sir, that person. Isn’t he the one in ONE STAR?”

“Yes, he is. I got a request for an arrangement so he’s going through the songs.”

“Wow.”

Kim JiMin looked up to KangYoon. Receiving such gazes from a teenage girl, KangYoon became slightly proud of himself. His voice now had more power when he taught Kim JiMin.

While they were immersed in harmonics, Jay Han called for KangYoon.

“Have you chosen?”

“Yes. I’ll go with this one.”

KangYoon had a look at the vinyl record that Jay chose. It was a song named ‘You’.

“My dumb head-may not feel anything – and my dry mouth – may not say anything – “

He wasn’t asked to, but Jay started singing comfortably. The awkward pronunciation from before was gone. KangYoon listened for a while before he spoke.

“Good. Although the song is a little old....”

“The arrangement is your job.”

This time, Jay Han smiled. KangYoon said okay and extended his hand.

“I shall answer your expectations.”

Jay Han also grabbed onto KangYoon's hand.

‘Wow.’

Kim JiMin found all this wondrous since this was usually something she saw through the TV.

“Hello.”

Lee HyunAh came to World's office with the rest of the band. This was her first official day at work. The others separated to go sign their contracts, while Lee HyunAh headed to the storeroom on the 1st floor; KangYoon had something to show her.

“This... is our practice room?”

Looking at the completely empty space, Lee HyunAh muttered emptily. Not to mention sound dampening, there wasn't even cardboard. It was just literally an empty space.

However, KangYoon spoke calmly as though there was nothing to worry about.

“Hey, you're not thinking I'm just going to leave you here, are you? You said you all have your personal equipment, so you just need to install the speakers, a mixer, and the sound dampening foam or some cardboard on the walls. The ceiling isn't too low here, so the sound won't echo as much as you think. I'll make it better than your previous studio so don't worry about it.”

“Boo.... The basement is better though....”

“Then do you want to use it together with JiMin?”

“No, I don't think that's right.”

Lee HyunAh shook her head. Rather than everyone sharing good equipment, it was better to have separate spaces even if they had to have slightly worse equipment. She grumbled a little, but she did feel thankful for KangYoon's consideration for her and the band.

“You know how to put up sound dampening foam, right?”

“Whaaaat!?”

Though, she still screamed at the sudden reversal of having to install sound dampening herself.

“Hey, hey. I’m not asking you to do it by yourself. We’re going to do it together.”

“You surprised me for a second.”

Lee HyunAh stroked her chest in relief at KangYoon’s joke. To indie bands, who had not so good practice environment, putting up sound dampening foams was commonplace, but still arduous.

KangYoon spoke the same thing to the rest of the band once they came down after signing the contract. They also seemed to have had a lot of worries about practice environment and rather welcomed KangYoon’s suggestion.

After that, Lee HyunJi came down and had a look at the soon-to-be practice room. Seeing the band chatting away, she spoke in worry.

“Did you say that they will have to do the construction themselves?”

“Yes. We need to save up on money after all.”

“I also told the band as well. They accepted it saying that it was the natural course of action. Looks like the kids are all nice. Though, I don’t want to make them go through such hardships....”

Lee HyunJi smiled bitterly. However, a practice studio was a must. KangYoon’s opinion was that they should buy more expensive materials and reduce the human resources cost, and Lee HyunJi agreed. They had to use environmentally-friendly materials and more effective materials for long-term health. This was much better than calling people to put up cardboard.

Like that, the studio construction was settled, and KangYoon

took out the next topic.

“I think we need a manager.”

“Manager? Oh, that’s right. We can’t cover for them all the time.”

Lee HyunJi agreed to that. Both KangYoon and she had a lot of things to do. Jung HyeJin had a lot of things to do in the company including accounting as well. There was a need for specialized personnel for the field.

“What kind of people do you want?”

“A person with more than 2 years of experience should do. I’m thinking someone who could cherish our kids and has some sense in the area.”

“I’ll investigate that. As for the pay....”

“This field is quite stingy on wages. Give more than other places. Being a manager is not an easy thing to do, you know?”

“Looks like we’ll be in the red for quite a while.”

“Well, we prepared ourselves for that.”

Lee HyunJi said that they should just match the wages with other places, but KangYoon shook his head.

“Once the employees are stable, then they would do better. It’s better to treat them well up first.”

“...Okay. Looks like we’ll have to do more for the time being.”

“Once it’s stable, they’ll also feel a sense of belonging.”

In the end, Lee HyunJi nodded his head to KangYoon. As someone who had to manage funds, human resources were the part that took the most money. Being asked to increase it more did make her feel bitter. However, KangYoon was looking at a bigger picture.

That evening, KangYoon started doing arrangements. He listened

to the song 'You' several times repeatedly and imagined about Jay Han's voice in this song.

'Let's arrange it so that the high-pitched parts are more emphasized. A groovy R&B style should work well.'

KangYoon controlled the synthesizer to create a drum rhythm. He slightly tampered with the basic 8-beat drums to add more ups and downs and added the basic melody for 'You'. Then, he played it back only to get a grey light.

'Urgh....'

KangYoon creased his brows. As he hadn't re-arranged the melody line, he was struck by a disaster. He stopped it immediately and started re-arranging the melody line.

'Jay Han's voice was relatively deep, right?'

KangYoon thought back to Jay's voice as he edited the song. He wanted to bring out the rhythm of the song more, but it was hard to do so since it was such an old song.

'Looks like I should redo the rhythm first.'

He created a set of basic rhythms and went with the one that he felt was the most appropriate. As a result, another edition of the basic 8-beat rhythm was chosen. When he added the bass line, a splendid frame for the song was complete.

'Should I see it?'

He played back the first 16 bars. Then, a weak white light could be seen. KangYoon tapped on his feet to see whether the rhythm was good or not. It didn't feel bad at all.

'So now it's the main line.'

KangYoon started adding things to the mainframe. It wasn't so easy to add things while considering Jay Han's voice. To bring out the best of his voice, it had to feel good yet simple rather than using fancy instrumentals. KangYoon tried his best to bring out

the ‘feel’ while repeating that process.

“Wow....”

Kim JiMin, who was learning harmonics in one corner of the studio, sparkled her eyes while watching KangYoon doing song arrangements. The sight of a retro music gradually turning into a modern one was a rare sight to see. She quietly approached behind KangYoon. She was curious.

“Sit.”

KangYoon felt her presence and told her to sit. Then, he kept working.

“This part is like this....”

When Kim JiMin arrived, KangYoon raised the volume. He was planning to show her the arrangement process. Alternating between the mixer, synthesizer, and PC, KangYoon’s hands moved about busily.

‘So, this is what arrangement is.’

Kim JiMin’s eyes shined while looking at the simple notes becoming more and more beautiful. The chords and the notes on the treble and bass clefs all felt curious to her. The song felt as though each puzzle pieces were find thing their places. Combining several instruments into one complete piece. That was what arrangement was about.

She had a lot of things she wanted to ask about, but she didn’t say anything. KangYoon was focused and was even sweating.

‘So cool. I’ll also....’

Kim JiMin saw her future inside KangYoon’s figure.

KangYoon’s figure as he tuned the music and creating something new was unspeakably cool to her.

Chapter 89. The Legend of Resuscitation (2)

Lee HyunJi's work speed was very fast.

It took less than two days for her to buy the sound dampening materials for Lee HyunAh and the band. Soon after, she was also finished with putting up employment ads.

KangYoon heard from Lee HyunJi only a few days later that Lee HyunJi selected some candidates through the 1st interview.

"...That was quick."

"It's just the 1st interview. There are 3 candidates."

"Out of how many?"

"Twelve. Our wages were good, so there were quite a lot of applicants. They'll be coming today so please take care of the interview."

Around 2 pm, the applicants arrived. Jung HyeJin gave them coffee, while KangYoon and Lee HyunJi started the interview.

KangYoon didn't drag out the interview. He asked mostly practical things from what kind of people they managed to what they thought the industry was heading to. Since he told them to come in comfortable clothing, the applicants came with neat clothes that weren't suits.

After one interviewee left, KangYoon shook his head.

"President, what is it?"

"I don't like him that much. He has a lot of experience, but I feel like he will be swept away."

"Swept away? What do you mean?"

When Lee HyunJi didn't understand him, KangYoon explained.

"To manage a celebrity, I believe that there is a need for clear personal views on matters as well. A manager must consider the

view of the company, as well as the celebrity and mediate between the two. But the applicants right now feel like parrots instead of mediators.”

“Are those the words from a senior of yours?”

“Fuu.... Maybe.”

KangYoon sighed. Then, he asked for the final applicant and Jung HyeJin guided the last applicant to the interview area.

This applicant had a tall stature and some heft to him as well. His eyes were sharp despite the naïve looking face. KangYoon greeted him and turned his eyes to the letter of personal introduction.

“Mr. Kim DaeHyun. 30 years old. 2 years of experience. So, you managed one celebrity for a long time. Jeon HyoJin, huh. 1st rate actress. She’s rumored to be picky, but you managed her for 2 years. Quite the feat, I should say.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Why did you apply?”

KangYoon gave the most difficult and most annoying question for all interviewees.

“The biggest reason is the wages.”

“The wages....”

“During my two years at the previous company, my wages were frozen.”

“Oh, my.”

KangYoon clicked his tongue. Money troubles were the most problematic. His wages might have been frozen due to his lack of ability, but he didn’t ask that straight up. He thought that was etiquette.

“So, you applied because the wages were high.”

“There’s that, but I also liked the fact that this was a new

company.”

“Really? Don’t people usually avoid new companies because it’s unstable?”

“The company I was at before had several rules since it was a big company. It was stable, and there were systems in place. However, it was hard to go up. However, if it’s at the starting level, I thought that I may be able to grow the scale of the company with my skills.”

This applicant was very challenging, and his words were okay.

KangYoon asked many other things as well. Mostly about practical work. For example, his actions when a celebrity has met with certain circumstances, or his work ethic.

KangYoon spent quite a lot of time in the final interview. This person was different from the previous two. KangYoon had a lot to ask.

KangYoon took care of all of his questions and ended the interview. After sending out the last interviewee, all the interviews were over.

“Phew. It’s over.”

Lee HyunJi stretched her arms. Judging other people wasn’t so easy to do. KangYoon took Lee HyunJi’s evaluation of the people and compared it with his own.

“So, you too like the last one, director.”

“I liked his honesty. And he looks like he won’t scheme. But the motivation for application was money, pfft. That was a little funny.”

“Was it Mr. DaeHyun? Looks like I should contact his previous company and ask them how he worked.”

“I’ll do that. Don’t you have musical work to do?”

“Oh, yes.”

KangYoon immediately stood up and headed to the basement studio. He was planning to finish the arrangement that he couldn't finish yesterday. But on his way down, he saw the door to the 1st floor practice room open. In curiosity, he went inside.

“There, a little bit to the left. To the left! Hey! It's off-angle!”

With Lee HyunAh's shout, the practice studio was under noise-proofing construction. Kim JinDae picked up heavy insulating foam and stuck it on the door and next to the door, while Lee ChaHee stuck the rest of the sound dampening materials onto the wall. Lee HyunAh went up the ladder and stuck them on the ceiling.

‘Amazing.’

Lee HyunAh's stomach was showing as her shirt was tied up at the bottom, and she was sweating. She was currently working while showing her thin waist.

“Oh? President, hello.”

Kim JinDae greeted KangYoon first. The band then stopped working and approached KangYoon. Lee HyunAh, who was on the ladder, also carefully climbed down.

“You are amazing. You even climb ladders?”

“3 years of being indie, this much is natural.”

KangYoon was somewhat proud to see Lee HyunAh change so much in 3 years, from the girl that was so shy that she couldn't even hand out her own composition to the rest of the team.

“Have you eaten yet?”

“Not yet....”

Lee HyunAh blurred her words. This was a signal that they should eat. KangYoon took out his credit card without saying much.

“Eat some jajangmyeon (black soybean noodles).”

“Yay!”

KangYoon gave them the card and turned around. He had to finish up his arrangement.

While the band was hopping in joy, Lee HyunAh pouted instead.

‘Tch, I was going to ask him to eat together.’

“Hey, hey. HyunAh! What do you want to eat?”

“Jumbo sized! The most expensive one.”

Kim JinDae asked, and Lee HyunAh replied that, but in the end, the menu was unified into spicy or chilly. Lee ChaHee’s opinion that they shouldn’t piss off the president so early subdued all of them. Lee HyunAh grumbled and stuffed the noodles in her mouth.

“You’ll become a pig you know.”

“Right back at you.”

Lee HyunAh snorted at Kim JinDae’s words and stole the soup from him as well.

“It’s done!”

When balancing, the last process of arrangement was done, KangYoon screamed out in joy. Kim JiMin, who was studying harmonics at the back, was surprised and came to him.

“Is it done?”

“Yup. Wanna listen?”

“Yes, please.”

KangYoon played the completed song. This was pure music recording without any voice. The several speakers installed inside the studio started generating various colors of music. Then, those notes combined into one and created light. It was a very bright white light. The intensity of the light only became stronger as it

went to the chorus and into the climax.

“The song’s good....’

Kim JiMin exclaimed. Like KangYoon, she tapped her right feet along with the rhythm. She even imitated KangYoon’s humming.

“The song’s okay, right?”

“Yes. It’s so good. I get that ‘feel’.”

“That’s good. Next time, try to express some more. Your expressivity will also increase.”

“Yes.”

Kim JiMin soon went back to studying. She immersed herself in studying both harmonics and the guitar.

Meanwhile, KangYoon saved the song onto a USB drive and then contacted Jay Han. Jay said that he will soon be at the company and ended the call. He seemed to be in quite a hurry.

Not even an hour later, Jay Han was led by Jung HyeJin inside the studio. KangYoon greeted him and let him listen to the song. Jay Han received the score and listened to the song while imagining his voice inside his head. The rhythmic R&B style song captivated him instantly. However, the worry that he may be the first to drop out among the top 10 grabbed his feet.

“The song’s great. But....”

Jay Han paused there for a second. When KangYoon looked at him doubtfully, he continued to speak.

“I’m not sure if this fits my voice or not. I do like R&B, but....”

“Then why don’t we monitor it right away?”

“Can we?”

Jay Han accepted KangYoon’s offer. KangYoon gave him some time to get to know the song while he prepared for the recording. Jay Han borrowed Kim JiMin’s guitar and learned the song while

playing it. Kim JiMin looked at that scene with curiosity.

After around 30 minutes, Jay Han said that he learned the song. KangYoon told him to go inside the booth and turned on the equipment. He set the mic to compliment his voice and started recording to monitor it later.

– The closed eyes – look only at me –

The drum beats and the bassline harmonized, and Jay Han's deep voice started ringing throughout the studio. The blue notes from his voice combined with the notes from the instrumentals and created white light.

‘It's combing well.’

Although his pronunciation wasn't perfect, the song still created a strong white light. The fact that he went with something that wasn't hard to pronounce was quite effective. Although his awkward dialect-like words and the weird accents on improper syllables had some problems, this could be fixed through practice later.

After the first verse, Jay Han left the booth. He wanted to listen to his own voice as soon as possible.

“Oh....”

He became touched by his own voice harmonizing with the music and closed his eyes. He was happy as though he found his matching clothes. However, KangYoon said that it was too early to celebrate and shook his head.

“You must practice your pronunciation a little more. Although we went with an easier song, you aren't completely there yet.”

“Yes. I'll practice a lot. Really.... Thank you so much!”

Jay Han's voice was filled with joy and emotion. Until now, he was always pointed out by the public that he was all about looks and had lots of problems with his pronunciation. But with this

song, he felt that he would be able to defeat all of those opinions in one go.

He received the score and the USB from KangYoon and left World Entertainment. He expressed his gratitude several times on the way out. KangYoon said that it was okay and asked him to show something good on the stage.

It was a rare holiday today.

Although it was, Lee HyunJi couldn't rest easy at home. She bought a basket of fruits and headed to S hospital, the largest hospital in Seoul. There, she went through a simple process and headed to a special room in one of the top floors. Going past several people in suits and medical gowns, there was a door.

She carefully opened the door and entered. Inside was a sofa, wall-mounted TV as well as many other decorations. Without the hospital bed, this would be mistaken for a hotel room.

"Well, well. If it isn't HyunJi."

"It has been a while, Chairman."

On the bed was the one she was meeting today. Chairman Won JinMoon of MG Entertainment. Unlike before, he had to meet Lee HyunJi with a very pale face. He did raise his voice to greet Lee HyunJi, but his voice no longer had the grandeur of before. The rubber pipe stuck below his nose made him look even sicker.

"Hur hur.... How long has this been? I think it's been more than a year."

"It hasn't been a year yet. I also came here a lot after I left the company."

"Did you?"

He smiled bitterly as though he remembered something bad.

"Those times were the good times. There was KangYoon, and

there was you. I miss the days when everything worked out fine. What is this balance between factions? I was too greedy. I only desired for both sides to grow... sigh. If I supported one side more, then KangYoon should be a director around now too. You'll be my right hand too. If that happened, this would have never happened."

"Chairman....."

When Lee HyunJi looked at him with a sad expression, Chairman Won JinMoon smiled saying that it was alright. However, his smile was a weak one.

"Ah, no. it's fine, it's fine. I'm just complaining since it feels so bad nowadays. JinPyo, that guy is currently working in my stead but there's no way the directors are so easy.... Damn those stupid men. They sent Eddios off to America, and JinSeo off to China. How does that make any sense? Their reasons are grand too. Eddios has enough support inside the country. They can come back anytime. JinSeo also needs to work in a bigger market for her future. In the end, it's all about their own asses, isn't it? Sigh... They don't even think about that there are new groups appearing in the country. Why do they keep going too far...."

Chairman Won JinMoon grumbled to Lee HyunJi. While peeling an apple, Lee HyunJi quietly listened to him.

"America and China, huh. Those kids must be having a hard time."

"That's right. HyunJi, what do you think?"

"If it were up to me, I would have objected until the end. Even JooAh failed in America after all."

"Fuu. Yeah. Those guys screwed JooAh up as well. But they still can't get themselves together. Just how much loss must they taste before they.... cough cough."

He seemed to have gotten agitated as he ended up coughing. Lee

HyunJi was about to press the bell for support, but Chairman Won JinMoon gestured her to stop, saying that it was okay. Fortunately, he calmed down quickly.

“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine. If only my body was in shape, I could have done something. You be careful too. Let your guard down and you might end up like me.”

“Sheesh, Chairman.”

“Next time, I wish to see KangYoon too. I know that he’s working without rest, but I still do want to see him.”

“Understood.”

Lee HyunJi nodded her head.

After that, she peeled fruits for the chairman and even took him out in a wheelchair for a walk. Seeing someone who was once the top of the industry falling to such a state, she felt bitter.

“Hello? I’m the presenter of Korea ONE STAR....”

Friday evening.

Korea ONE STAR’s live broadcast began. After today, the top 10 would be reduced to top 8. The viewers, judges, and the audience got themselves ready for the ride.

However, the most nervous people were the top 10 who were waiting behind the stage.

“Fuu, fuu....”

One of them, named Yang JiWon, heaved deep breaths to calm herself down. The other contenders also calmed themselves down in their own way.

“Huh? Oppa, what are you doing?”

Kang YoungJoo, one of the top 10, looked at Jay Han with

curiosity.

“I’i frathithii (I’m practicing).”

“You can take the pen out of your mouth you know....”

Jay Han was practicing his pronunciation. Like what KangYoon said, he practiced pronunciation using methods that actors and voice actors used.

Kang YoungJoo kept watching Jay Han in curiosity but eventually left seeing that he didn’t react much. However, Jay Han still focused on his practice.

Waiting time finished quickly. The edited footage of the dorm lifestyle was broadcasted, and each of the top 10 went on to the stage.

“Good luck!”

“Unni, do your best!”

“Oppa, you too!”

The top 10 cheered for each other. However, they inwardly put up guards thinking that they shouldn’t drop out first. The waiting room was a silent war zone.

– I – love you – with my all —

Showing fancy vibrato voice, the man before Jay Han showed his performance. The judges gave scores on their own standards, and the viewers that cheered for them showed support by texting.

After the song was over, the candidate stood in front of the judges. The leftmost female judge, Hong SeYeon, a songwriter, started her opinions first.

“Well done. I have listened to your song very well. This song might have gotten a little slow if you let your guard down, but you still brought out the essence well. However, I personally feel rather regrettable that the beginning and the end didn’t balance out well. If you controlled your voice a little better, you could have brought

us a song that was done more tastefully. It was a good song.”

“Thank you.”

“As for my score.”

The LCD screen next to Hong SeYeon started rising. The score was 92. It was neither high nor low.

Following that, Moon SangJae gave 94. The problem lay with Lee JaeHyuk.

“Well done. I actually think differently from the previous two people. This song, ‘Fate’, is all about controlling power. Moreover, in the arrangement, you gave accents on the control of strength. However, that wasn’t enough in my opinion, and the song overall ended up less powerful than it should be. It’s a little bit of a pity. The reason I tried to stop you from doing this song was because it feels different to listen and to sing. Nonetheless, you have done a good job. As for my score.”

Lee JaeHyuk’s scoreboard started rising. The score stopped at 86. Today, Lee JaeHyuk’s scores were relatively lower than in the previous weeks. He didn’t have a great expression as though he was disappointed by the top 10.

92, 94, 86. That was this person’s score.

“Thank you.”

Consoling himself, the man went behind the stage.

“Mr. Jay Han! Are you ready?”

“Yes.”

Hearing the call from the FD (Floor director), Jay Han took out the pen from his mouth. It was time to show what he was capable of. Guided by the FD, he moved towards the stage.

Chapter 90. The Legend of Resuscitation (3)

– The song I will be singing this time is sir Lee HyungChan’s ‘You’.

While JayHan was walking up to the stage, the audience and the viewers were watching a video. In the video, Jay Han introduced the song he would be singing, as well as why he chose this song and how he would sing it.

– This song is very important for me. Until now, I received a lot of rebukes due to my inability of proper pronunciation of the lyrics, but I want to show that I can express my emotions through these lyrics.

After the short interview footage, the stage lights turned on. Then, the drums and the bass started flowing out of the speakers.

“Whooooo~~~”

Jay Han’s charming humming decorated the instrumentals and the audience with signs started cheering. However, they were an extreme minority. Most of the others didn’t seem to care at all.

Jay Han closed his eyes and started singing.

“Now I can’t see you even if I want to – but closing my eyes I–”

Slow but not dragging, he matched the rhythm with his feet. Jay Han’s unique deep voice added power to the song. He was careful to pronounce each word properly and sang.

“Now, I can’t see anything – cannot say anything—”

The song went past the introduction and into the development section. The audience felt that the awkward pronunciation of before couldn’t be felt anymore and they could now immerse themselves in the lyrics a lot more.

“The song’s good”

“It’s so....”

Little by little, people started falling for the song.

Not seeming to care, Jay Han focused on the song with his eyes still closed.

‘It does feel awkward not to see the light.’

KangYoon was watching Jay Han’s stage through TV at the company. Musical notes and light could not be felt through media. He felt stuffy as he couldn’t see the details, but he could feel that Jay Han’s song didn’t sound awkward anymore.

“He’s really good. So cool....”

Kim JiMin, who was watching by KangYoon’s side, became absent-minded as Jay Han sang the climax part of the song. The seemingly not-caring audience had now turned into passionate audience as the song reached the climax. Kim JiMin was surprised to see the reactions of the audience.

“Sir, I think that place is turning into an uproar. I wish I was there....”

“Should I have looked for tickets? I didn’t think about that.”

Looking at the disappointed Kim JiMin, KangYoon made a bitter smile. Although he finished the arrangement for the song he had a lot of work to do as the CEO of a company and didn’t think about getting tickets. It was a bit of a pity.

– I will—love you—for-ever—

Eventually, the song reached its conclusion and ended in a grand manner. Unlike what the chorus was singing at the back of the stage, Jay Han sang 3 tones higher than the original. The emotional song ended in a passionate song. The only female judge there, Hong SeYeon, stood up, while a few of the fans stood up as well and cheered.

Jay Han didn’t seem to be nervous anymore and wiped his sweat

with a small smile as he waited for the judge's opinions.

The excitement from the song still didn't seem to disappear yet as Hong SeYeon barely managed herself to sit down.

– Well done! Whoo! This is just the first round of the finals, but I didn't think I would get to hear such a song. The rhythm unique to R&B is definitely there and the 'can't see you' at the chorus part was sung in a way that wasn't just shouting it out loud but held back a little more. I think that was the point of this stage. And the climax after the chorus, I can't say anything here. This song was very old, so it should have been hard to rearrange and practice it, but both the storytelling and the emotion-telling was the best! My score is.

The scoreboard in front of Hong SeYeon started rising. 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90. Then, the people started cheering. The first digit stopped at 9 and the second digit started rolling as well. The people started sweating from their hands. 7, 8, 9, 0, 1, 2.... The second digit rolled for much longer than usual.

Then, it stopped at 8. The score was 98.

– Whoaaaaa——!

The audience cheered at the result. This was a very hard score to see. There was no way she could give out full marks already, but the song was good... The score showed a lot of hesitation in the decision.

Following that, Moon SangJae's scores weren't that much different either. It was 97. With two people giving scores above 95, the cheers became even louder.

Now, everyone's gazes fell onto the final judge, Lee JaeHyuk. He opened his eyes and spoke calmly.

– The first time I heard that you chose this song, I was half doubtful. Yes, this song is definitely easier to pronounce, but I thought that it would be hard to rearrange this song to fit the

current trends. But after I listened to it, I thought ‘oh! This song turned out really good.’ Jay Han’s voice has his unique charm to it as well as depth, so it’s really good to listen to it, but it should have been hard to find a song that fits your voice. A good song and a good voice. You have shown us a splendid combination of the two. My main gripe about it, as always, is the breathing. You must beware of the breathing sounds. Just before you went into the climax, there was a feeling of being slightly cut off. If you could fix that part, then it would be great. It was a good song. As for my score.

With a long comment, Lee JaeHyuk’s scoreboard started rising as well. The audience and the viewers at home paid attention to how high of a score he would give. He was known for giving smaller scores than the other two judges. Not to mention 95, he rarely gave out scores above 90. That was how much everyone looked forward to this score.

But then...

-Wow!

When the first digit was fixed to 9, the people in the audience started cheering. The person himself, Jay Han, also widened his eyes the numbers were rolling faster than before.

“Don’t you dare tell me that it will be revealed after the commercial.”

Kim JiMin also paid attention to the score while shaking her hands. KangYoon also couldn’t take his eyes off the TV in curiosity.

– 98! It’s 98!

Eventually, the presenter’s excited voice came through the TV. Jay Han jumping around in joy, as well as the passionate cheers of the audience and the satisfied smile of the judges, were all captured by the camera.

‘Good for him.’

KangYoon smiled in satisfaction thinking that a good song went to a good singer.

After the live broadcast of Korea ONE STAR, the songs of the top 10 were revealed to the public. After one day, most of the songs went up in the charts by around 10 steps. The popularity of audition programmes could be felt here.

“First place is ‘You’. Well, the judges were like that yesterday, so I don’t find it that much curious.”

Looking at the rankings of songs in the music website with the largest user base, Lee HyunJi clapped towards KangYoon in amazement. KangYoon shrugged his shoulders.

“It’s good that it turned out well.”

“At times like these, you should be happy. Like this.”

Lee HyunJi grabbed KangYoon’s hand and high-fived. KangYoon also laughed. He was indeed happy.

“I kinda did realize from last time, but your arranging skills are quite amazing. Miss HeeYoon’s composition skills and your arrangements. Looks like we have no worries for money for a while.”

“Is that so?”

“Of course.”

Lee HyunJi stood up and spoke in a loud voice, as though she didn’t like KangYoon’s attitude.

“It’s not just once, this is the second time already. Moreover, it was ranked 1st this time. You put yourself as Muse this time, right?”

“Yes, for the name value. I did that.”

“The singers and companies that were half-doubtful will also proactively seek you out now. Last time, they were nobodies, but it will be different this time.”

Lee HyunJi was filled with hope. She gripped her fist saying that he should leave it to her.

“Looks like we’ll get busy. Heheheh, I’ll grab some good business.”

“Where are you going?”

When Lee HyunJi grabbed her coat to leave, KangYoon asked doubtfully. She smiled and responded.

“Business of course. I can’t miss an opportunity like this. I’ll be back soon.”

She seemed joyful as she left the office while hopping.

“I hope she doesn’t fall....”

Seeing her smile like a little girl, KangYoon ended up laughing.

He left the office and headed to the band practice studio on the 1st floor.

“Looks like the construction is almost done.”

The soundproofing and sound-dampening materials that Lee HyunJi brought were nowhere to be seen on the ground. KangYoon headed inside.

“Oh? Hello.”

The members of the band, The Formidables, and their new manager Kim DaeHyun stopped what they were doing and greeted him. KangYoon raised his hand and accepted the greeting.

“So, it looks like construction is almost done.”

“Yes, we only have the ceiling left.”

Kim JinDae answered KangYoon.

Lee HyunAh was on the ladder. She stuck the last soundproofing material, and Lee ChaHee grabbed the ladder. The two male members cleaned up the floor and walked around the walls to see if there were any gaps.

‘It’s good to see that there’s no differentiation between genders.’

They worked just as hard as the others in arduous work. KangYoon received a good impression of them. ‘Ladies are weak and should be respected’ didn’t seem to exit here. Lee HyunAh sweating while working hard impressed him a lot.

“It’s finally over.... Huh? You were here?”

After sticking all the soundproofing materials, Lee HyunAh finally looked down and found KangYoon. When KangYoon waved his hand, she slowly climbed down the ladder. The male members folded the ladder and cleaned up the rest.

“Aah. Aah — I should do proper testing, but for now, I can’t hear any noise.”

“Yes. I think it worked out well. It’s not that stuffy, and there were just enough materials too.”

“That was close. You have your instruments, right?”

“Yes. We’ll set those up after we clean up.”

They swept the floor and cleared away the trash. After cleaning up the plastic buckets and other things on the floor, the practice studio now looked very convincing.

KangYoon also cleaned up with them. Everyone held him back, but KangYoon shook his head.

“I couldn’t help out in the construction, so I should at least do this much.”

The fact that he couldn’t help them due to his arrangement work tugged his mind. Although he still had the time to look after Km JiMin, he felt as though he abandoned the band and felt sorry.

“It’s fine, it’s fine. Oppa, I’m hungry can you....”

When the mood was about to relax, Lee HyunAh stepped up. KangYoon laughed at those words. He wordlessly took out his credit card and everyone cheered.

“We moved in, so jajangmyeon is fine, right?”

“Yeees.”

Somehow, their replies were rather bland. They felt slight disappointment. KangYoon added another line.

“Tangsuyuk too.”

“Yay!”

Tangsuyuk was great for jajangmyeon.

(T/N: In Korea, when people move houses (in this case, studio), they usually celebrate by eating jajangmyeon (black soybean noodles). Tangsuyuk (fried pork in sweet sauce) is like the wonderful side menu. FYI, where I live, jajangmyeon is around 4.50USD, while Tangsuyuk is around 12USD)

After a luxurious lunch, KangYoon, the band members, and manager Kim DaeHyun started setting up the equipment. KangYoon installed the second-hand speakers and connected them to the mixer.

“You have to think of it as ‘if going inside, then coming outside’. Remember ‘if going inside, coming outside’.”

“Yes. Speaker out, so mixer in. Are the others the same?”

“Yes. If you don’t get anything then ask again.”

KangYoon taught manager Kim DaeHyun about installation and the mixer, as he installed things. Kim DaeHyun listened carefully while writing down sound set up theory into a note. A band’s manager must know about the acoustic setup. KangYoon thought

so.

Kim JinDae moved the drums and set up omnidirectional microphones and acrylic panels. Then, he set up a mic for the bass drum and connected those to the mixer.

“This isn’t an ordinary studio...?”

Kim JinDae. Was flabbergasted while looking at the microphones and the acrylic panels. This was going beyond just setting things up. The bass and the electric guitar was the same. They also pulled out a line input and connected them to the speakers. They shook their heads as well, saying that there was no need to go this far, but they went with KangYoon’s words saying that they must listen to the others as well.

“Oppa. The speaker positions are interesting. They aren’t at the front but at the back.”

Lee HyunAh found the speakers on each side of the door quite curious.

“If they’re at the front, then the sound will get clumped up. Your monitor....”

“I should just listen to the speaker, right?”

“Get used to it. You must get used to listening to all the sounds.”

Lee HyunAh said she understood and connected the lines.

The setting went smoothly. After managing the cables, they went for a sound check. KangYoon taught manager Kim DaeHyun how to control the mixer, and they started tuning the volume. With the sound dampeners absorbing unnecessary sound, they had considerable volume even in this tight space.

After a jamming session, the final test was over.

“It’s over!”

Along with Lee HyunAh’s declaration, the practice studio construction was wholly complete. Everyone cheered in

satisfaction at their new practice room. Although it was quite small, but the sound was much better than where they practiced previously.

When everyone collapsed onto the floor, exhausted, KangYoon spoke.

“There’s one final thing to do.”

“Eeeh?”

Work again? Everyone showed their fatigue. However, he didn’t exactly talk about ‘work’.

“Why don’t we change the name of the band?”

“The name?”

Kim JinDae asked back. Due to the 3 years of affection, he didn’t want to change the name that easily. However, Lee ChaHee was different.

“I agree. Our current name will be quite funny once it’s on TV....”

The opinions were split half and half. Kim JinDae and Lee HyunAh objected while Lee ChaHee and Jung ChanGyu wanted to change. They started discussing it when KangYoon spoke.

“Let’s say you went to music camp. The presenter is going to introduce you like this. Blah blah blah, whatever descriptions and then at the last part. I introduce to you! The~ Formidables~! Like that....”

“Let’s change it, right now.”

Lee HyunAh quickly changed opinions. She didn’t seem to even think about it and didn’t turn back.

“Hey, Lee HyunAh.”

“Oppa, this is not right. Definitely.”

“.....”

After quarreling for a while, they decided to change the name.
And after discussing it for a while, their name was changed.

To 'White Moonlight'.

Chapter 91. The Appearance of The Formidables, White Moonlight (1)

– A song for a band? I don't think I can do that yet.

“I'll send you some examples. Try listening to it and coming up with one.”

Late at night, KangYoon was calling with HeeYoon. He sent Lee HyunAh and the band home and remained at the company. He had quite a lot of work to do still.

– Okay. It's the band that we went to watch with SoYoung last time, right?”

“Yeah. The leader there can compose as well, so you don't need to be pressured.”

– I am going to be pressured. It's your company, I can't do it jokingly.

“Girlie.”

KangYoon leaked a laugh. He could feel worry along with a slightly complaining tone. He felt warm feeling his sister's attitude.

– It will take some time. I never composed for a band before, so I want to ask the professors for help.

“Don't push yourself, okay?”

– Yeah, you too, oppa. Don't overwork yourself. Drink in moderation, and women too...

“Okay, okay. And what the heck was that last one.”

KangYoon finished up his call with HeeYoon and sent a few of Lee HyunAh's band songs to her e-mail. Then, he did transact the documents that Jung HyeJin sent up before going home.

On the way home, KangYoon took a bus. Looking out the window

at the calm waters of the Han river, he fell into thought.

‘The Formidables, no, White Moonlight should enter major soon....’

KangYoon opened the window slightly. The cold wind cooled his head.

‘Strictly speaking, White Moonlight is 2nd generation indie band. They’re well positioned as well. Can they enter major now? Or....’

KangYoon thought about this very deeply. There were a lot of cases where well-established indie bands came to major. However, successful cases were very rare. Of course, most of them managed to profit and earned money as well as giving their contracted company the right money, but only an extreme minority gave big impressions to the general public. In this era where idols were the trend, indie bands were considered ‘gourmet food’ like existences.

KangYoon would hate for his own singers to become a part of a niche market. He had to look for the right causes of that happening in order to not repeat the same process.

‘The style of the singer is important, but the priority is to match the preferences of the general public. Also, they must have moderately good appearances. Or have unique characteristics. I need to make the people turn around to them at least once. But are they ready?’

Thinking about a lot of things, KangYoon shook his head. It was not easy to decide that in one go.

The bus had already arrived at his destination. KangYoon had fallen into thought and almost missed his destination. Though, he could get off as the bus didn’t leave just yet.

Even while walking, his thoughts about the band continued. However, he couldn’t easily think of a strategy.

The next day, even coming to work, KangYoon couldn’t stop

thinking about White Moonlight. He was practically deciding on a path for them, so it was natural.

“Are you worried about something?”

Lee HyunJi brewed a cup of coffee for KangYoon.

“Oh, director.”

“You look serious. Is there something problematic?”

KangYoon spoke about the strategy for White Moonlight. While listening to KangYoon, Lee HyunJi sipped on her coffee as well. Slowly drinking the bitter coffee, she slowly spoke.

“To go to a major, popularity should come first. But their fan base isn’t big enough yet.”

“Yes. Even if they make an album, the income will be at a dangerous level. Their foundation is a little weak too.... But I think they’re capable of challenging major. Though, the risks would be big....”

KangYoon sighed. To delay going to major for a foundation, then the immediate income would be small, but to boldly challenge major can expect big profits, but the consequences of failure were big as well. The former was safer, but the temptation of the latter was big.

Lee HyunJi thought for a moment before speaking.

“If it’s you, president. I don’t think we’ll fail even if we go major.”

“Director, wait....”

“However.”

Before KangYoon could say anything, she gestured him to stop. He listened in.

“You’ll receive a lot of requests for arrangements or compositions. Once that happens, even you will have a hard time

focusing on the band alone. And once that happens, my opinion is that they would go downhill.”

“Hmm.....”

“Right now, we have a quite a lot of money from your songs. There will be a lot of songs in the future as well. My opinion is that we should look at the long-term for the band.”

KangYoon thought for a moment before agreeing.

“I understand. Looks like I was in a hurry.”

“I can understand you. Most of the income of the company is on you, after all. The rest..... Pfft, are well, kids. You’re like the breadwinner.”

“Oh my.”

KangYoon shook his head at Lee HyunJi’s joke.

But now that he decided on s strategy, he felt very calm. KangYoon organized the strategy and headed to where White Moonlight was practicing.

“Jay! You’re too vigorous nowadays, take it slow!”

On their way home after meeting a producer from the TV station, Kim SeMi tapped on Jay Han’s shoulders. She was also in the top 8.

“What do you mean slow, the last time was just luck.”

“What luck. You were just acting all along, weren’t you?”

The two quarreled as they headed to the lobby. In the lobby were not only employers but normal people as well. They twitched after seeing Jay Han and Kim SeMi before talking about it amongst themselves.

Upon Kim SeMi’s pestering, Jay Han bought coffee from the café in the lobby. The two female staff there twitched for a moment after seeing the two, but they still proficiently received the orders.

“10,500 won.” (10.50USD)

“Here.”

“Thank you. And may....”

Jay Han was about to turn around after paying when the staff grabbed him. The female staff hesitated for a moment before giving him a pen and paper.

“I didn’t make a sign for being a star yet.... Are you fine with a normal one?”

“Yes, yes.”

Jay Han gave an ordinary sign. The staff blushed and thanked him, and he went to his seat.

“Wow, Jay! Aren’t you the popular man. Looks like the last song was big huh?”

“The song was definitely good.”

“Please introduce me to that composer too. Was it Muse? Just who is it?”

“It’s a secret~.”

“No, don’t say that. Please, pretty please?”

Jay Han had a hard time declining Kim SeMi’s pestering.

KangYoon received a score and a music file through his e-mail. When he played back the file while reading the score, it was a slow-beat ballad. The melody was simple rather than fancy. However, it steadily climbed up.

‘There are no lyrics. So, she left the lyrics and the arrangement to this side, eh?’

KangYoon saw through HeeYoon’s intentions. Then, he was about to do the songs when something caught his eyes. It was the list of songs that he was requested to rearrange.

‘I don’t think I can take this too.’

KangYoon put HeeYoon’s song to one side. It would be very difficult to do that on top of the requests from other companies. KangYoon thought about it for a moment before deciding that he should leave the arrangement to HyunAh.

He headed to White Moonlight’s practice studio to give the song and the score. He could hear very little of what they were practicing from the outside. It was the effect of soundproofing. Without it, the instruments would have rung out throughout the entire building.

“Huh? President.”

Kim JinDae discovered KangYoon first and stopped playing. When the drums stopped, the other instruments all lost their fun and the song was forcibly halted. The others all greeted KangYoon and sat in front of him. Lee HyunAh came to him first.

“Here.”

“What’s this?”

“Your new song.”

KangYoon didn’t explain for long. Lee HyunAh received the song and started playing the synthesizer. As she once majored composition, her keyboard skills were quite good.

“The song’s good. The melody is desperate. I think it’s about ‘loss’.”

Jung ChanGyu commented his own opinion. Kim JinDae also agreed with that opinion and nodded his head.

“President, did you make this?”

KangYoon shook his head at Lee ChaHee’s question.

“No, it’s made by the exclusive composer for this place.”

“What? There’s an exclusive composer?”

Lee ChaHee's eyes widened. A small company like this having an exclusive composer was something she heard for the first time. Moreover, the song was very good as well. She wanted to do a song like this.

"The song is really good. It's definitely our style. Though, it's a pity that there are no lyrics."

Lee HyunAh seemed to like this song and didn't stop complimenting it.

"You should do the lyrics yourself. The composer didn't make it saying that it should be better for the singer to do it."

"Oh, really? What about the arrangement...?"

KangYoon pointed towards the members when asked about the arrangement.

"You have the band here, so I think it will be better for you four to do it together. HyunAh has done it until now, and I think it will be better to do it your style. How about it?"

"Oppa, that's...."

Before Lee HyunAh could say something in disappointment about the lack of KangYoon's arrangements, Jung ChanGyu interfered.

"That sounds interesting, let's do it."

"Wouldn't the four of us make something better?"

Lee ChaHee chimed in as well. Even the quiet Kim JinDae nodded his head in agreement. Lee HyunAh, who usually didn't like her own pieces being tampered with, also ended up agreeing.

KangYoon added a comment just in case.

"You can think of it as arranging it while practicing it as well. I think that's why there are no separate scores for each of you. Think of it as training teamwork."

"Yes."

“Let’s do the recording a week later. I’ll also come and edit what I find necessary. From now, I’ll tell you the schedule through the manager, is that okay with you, manager DaeHyun?”

Manager Kim DaeHyun immediately replied to KangYoon’s words even while reading a book related to acoustics. KangYoon was satisfied by his attitude towards work and left the studio.

“Let’s learn the song first. Gather around.”

When KangYoon left, Lee HyunAh sat on the synthesizer again. She set the synthesizer to piano and started learning the song with everyone else. As they had to add the lyrics as well, there were a lot of things to do.

There were quite a lot of requests for arrangements, but there was some work regarding White Moonlight as well. KangYoon headed to the holy lands of indie bands, Hongdae (Hongik university district), with Lee HyunJi while they were creating the song.

“There are a lot of college students for sure. Good times.”

Said Lee HyunJi while walking through the streets of Hongdae. Looking at the students filled with vitality, she seemed quite envious. KangYoon only laughed it over.

The two headed to various concert venues in Hongdae. However, there was a problem.

“Okay, we understand. We’ll discuss it and come back later.”

After listening to the prices, Lee HyunJi shook her head and left through the door. KangYoon was also flabbergasted by the insane rental fees. The two headed to another place and grumbled.

“Why is an indie stage so expensive? We might as well rent a real one.”

Lee HyunJi complained in anger. KangYoon didn’t feel that

much different from her. As indies gained popularity, the land prices in Hongdae also rose and the rental fees had risen as well. Although they researched this beforehand, they still found it absurd.

“I was planning to get a regular contract for at least 3 or 4 places, but with prices like these... we can only lower the number.”

KangYoon also found this serious. He was planning to show a lot of performances by signing contracts with various places, but with these prices, there would be a detriment in the plan. But just in case, he visited all the concert venues in Hongdae.

However....

“Looks like they teamed up.”

Lee HyunJi couldn't hide her disappointment. All the concert venues seemed to have schemed together as the rental fees were insanely high. She grabbed her head.

“What do we do now? Just sign a contract with one place?”

KangYoon also couldn't say anything easily. Doing concerts was a necessity. However, there would be immense losses with rental fees like these. Right now, they needed both income and fans. It would be a stretch to sign a contract like this.

Then, something flashed in his head.

“Was Yeonnam-dong right next to this place?”

“Yes, what about it?”

“As far as I know, there are clubs starting to appear there too.”

“They're starting to appear. But the big concerts still happen in Hongdae. Would the people really be willing to walk that far?”

Lee HyunJi asked in worry.

Next to Hongdae was Yeonnam-dong. As the prices of residence increased around Hongdae, the clubs that held indie concerts were

being pushed out. The reason for the increase in rental fees was in the end, due to land prices. However, Yeonnam-dong was a different story. Although there was the pressure of the poorer environment....

KangYoon thought about it for a moment before coming to a decision. Then he spoke with assurance.

“Let’s just do 1 contract.”

“Just one? Wouldn’t that be insufficient for PR?”

“Let’s do a short-term one. Instead, we’ll use the remaining funds and the income to....”

KangYoon pointed towards a rather old building. It was an old building in Yeonnam-dong. However, cafés were starting to appear in places, and people seemed to be increasing as well.

“Rather than paying expensive rental fees, let’s just make one. A concert venue.”

“Whaaaat?”

Lee HyunJi’s jaws gaped at KangYoon’s insane plan.

Chapter 92. The Appearance of The Formidables, White Moonlight (2)

“Aren’t you getting your priorities wrong here? Building our own concert venue....”

Lee HyunJi was skeptical about it.

Even a decent set of stage speakers would cost around a million won (1,000 USD).

Renting a building, modifying the internal layout, and installing various equipment would require them to use all their emergency funds. This was not a decision to be made lightly.

“I’d rather we not take a loan this early. One of our few advantages currently is that we have no debt....”

Money troubles really weren’t that easy to deal with. However, KangYoon continued to try and persuade HyunJi.

“If we were to start advertising, the expenditure should slowly start coming back in from bands starting to hire the concert venue. From what I see, indie bands are suffering from high concert fees. If we rent out the venue cheaper than the other halls. Then we should be able to profit a lot.”

“That sounds okay, but the existing venue owners will go mad.”

“They’re the bad guys for teaming up, not us.”

KangYoon’s words were right. The other owners practically extorted what little money indie bands had. They were the bad guys and not them who were trying to enable the small indie bands to operate on a smaller budget. Lee HyunJi thought about it for a moment before shrugging her shoulders.

“Ha. You know, President, you can be rather stubborn at times. However, you’re right. If we succeed, then it will be good for PR later, and we would have gotten ourselves an exclusive concert

venue at a cheap price. But I'm worried about the immediate future. We're gonna have a hard time, especially when those old asses start trying to pull us back."

"They won't do that right away. After all, they also have their own relations to consider. And by that point, our concert venue will be more of a charity than anything else. We don't need to stake our lives for this place after all. This, can all become material for marketing, no?"

"Hahahahahah!"

Lee HyunJi burst out laughing.

"Good, very good. Beautifying and cleaning up publicity issues like this are my specialty. My, our indie band may become an idol of sorts at this rate."

"That's a good thing. Looks like I'll need to teach manager DaeHyun acoustics as soon as possible as I'll be leaving the managing of the venue to him."

"Looks like he'll have a hard time. At this rate, he will become an expert."

"Didn't you know? Idol managers sometimes replace their singers in the dances. This is easy compared to that."

"Really? Looks like managers these days are quite multi-talented."

Saying things that would make others shiver in fear, the two signed a contract with the most popular concert venue in Hongdae. This was a decision from the conclusion that they required a concert venue to show the band to the popular masses.

While signing the contract, KangYoon's insides boiled.

'It is really expensive....'

However, his will to build his own concert venue was fired up as well. He resolved that he would soon end contracts like this.

To teach the SLS vocal method, professor Choi ChanYang headed to World Entertainment. His new student, Kim JiMin, was still young, but was smart and absorbed his teachings like a sponge. He found it enjoyable to teach her.

“Lululu~”

When he opened the door to the office, KangYoon and Lee HyunJi couldn't be seen anywhere. Instead, one of their employees, Jung HyeJin, greeted him instead.

“Oh? Hello, professor.”

“Hello. Looks like everyone's out.”

“The President is away on a song, while the director went out for business. Would you like some coffee?”

“Please.”

Jung HyeJin's coffee was very sweet and fragrant. It was just right for the rather picky Choi ChanYang's tastes.

“Nice coffee.”

“Thanks.”

Jung HyeJin had a lot of things to do but sat down in front of professor Choi ChanYang and accompanied him. Strictly speaking, professor Choi ChanYang was a guest. She humorously continued the conversation and even talked about KangYoon and Lee HyunJi, which made professor Choi ChanYang slowly fall for her words.

“...Wow. Professor, you look so young. You're in your forties?”

“You're quite the beauty too.”

“I hear that a lot. Hahaha.”

The two became closer. Although the disparity between their ages were quite large, their communication code seemed to match well with each other and they didn't stop talking. Jung HyeJin

endlessly took out new topics to speak about, while professor Choi ChanYang kept up with her and talked to her about them. Jung HyeJin's eyes shined at his diversity of knowledge.

After quite a long time, Kim JiMin, who was dressed in school uniform, arrived. She opened the door and found the two people talking to each other.

“Hello, professor. You're early.”

“Oh, I just woke up early today. Let's go down to the studio then.”

“Yes, let's drink again sometime.”

Jung HyeJin cleared away the coffee mugs and sent the two away.

Kim JiMin felt slightly strange while going down the stairs with professor Choi ChanYang.

“You were close with HyeJin-unni?”

“We just started getting close today. Why?”

“Is there... something going on between the two of you?”

“Hey, hey. Consider the age difference.”

Professor Choi ChanYang pushed Kim JiMin's back. He didn't exactly dislike the sound of that and giggled.

“Let's just put ‘quietly sleep on the road’... sleep? Slept? Oh, this is hard.”

Lee HyunAh was currently writing lyrics while practicing.

The arrangement of the song was split into parts where each team member would write their own line, then Lee HyunAh would look at them and add her own suggestions to it. Sometimes, it was hard since their opinions clashed, but the process of mediating their thoughts was very fun.

However, progress was slow. This was the fourth day already, but not even the first verse was done yet.

“Let’s just rest, yeah? Rest up!”

Lee HyunAh gave up first after the long hours of practice that went on since early morning. With the leader being like this, the rest of the members didn’t even need to be mentioned.

“I’m hungry....”

“Let’s work on it after we eat.”

When Jung ChanGyu muttered that, Lee ChaHee suggested they order food to Lee HyunAh. Lee HyunAh agreed with her suggestion.

Manager Kim DaeHyun received their request and they soon got delivery food. They all looked tired as they picked up their spoons. Kim JinDae’s hair was all oily, while Lee ChaHee couldn’t even put on powder makeup today. Jung ChanGyu’s face was also very oily. They were too tired to even wash up. However, as the leader, Lee HyunAh was immaculate. She was wearing neat clothes and even had a light layer of makeup on.

“Shouldn’t you rest a bit?”

Manager Kim DaeHyun asked while they were eating, but Lee HyunAh shook her head.

“We haven’t done much. We should finish it by tomorrow.”

“Everyone else looks exhausted though.”

However, Lee HyunAh’s stubbornness was not easy to snap. The other members looked as though they were about to die.

After the meal was over, manager Kim DaeHyun said that he would clean it up. The other members expressed their thanks and rested for a little bit. Everyone seemed to be lacking in sleep as they lied down on the floor of the studio and closed their eyes.

Manager Kim DaeHyun took the empty plates to outside the

office. When he was putting those down, KangYoon was walking up the stairs.

(T/N: Ordering delivery food sometimes come in their own plates and dishes. Those are then wrapped up in a vinyl bag and put outside the door. The delivery man would take it back later.)

“Manager.”

“Oh, President. You’re here.”

KangYoon was coming back from Hongdae after a contract. The contract had obviously gone well as he had a smile on his face.

“Oh, looks like you had a late lunch.”

“Yes. The practice went on for some time.”

“Next time, make sure they eat before 1 o’clock.”

“Understood, sir.”

Aside than that, KangYoon also asked a lot of things, including his studies in acoustics. Manager Kim DaeHyun replied that he was still lacking in that department and that he would learn it as soon as possible. KangYoon’s words may have put some pressure on him, but he took it well.

“Are you going to the practice studio?”

“Yes. I’m curious as to how far they’ve come along with the song.”

KangYoon headed to the practice studio on the 1st floor. When he went in, the members of White Moonlight were back at work again after their meal.

‘The light is a little weak, maybe because it’s not finished yet?’

The light produced by them was weak. The notes from the bass were especially very inconsistent. It was because the bass hadn’t decided on how to play the chord progression. Despite that, the notes stabilized after she discussed it with the drummer.

The problem was the vocals.

‘I think she arranged it into a rock-ballad, but the vocal power seems a little weak.’

KangYoon thought that this would sound better if Lee HyunAh could shout the phrases loudly and refreshingly, but Lee HyunAh wasn’t exactly capable of doing that. Of course, her voice was very good, but it lacked that specific element. As though to reflect that, the light was becoming weak after her notes mixed in.

However, they hadn’t finished their arrangement. It was unknown what kind of song they would produce. He only watched their progress and did not say anything.

A few days later.

KangYoon was notified that White Moonlight had finished their song and headed to the practice studio. He was planning to record it immediately once he judged that it was okay after hearing it live.

Lee HyunAh asked KangYoon in confidence after finishing her preparations.

“Can we start?”

“Go ahead.”

The drums leisurely gave a four-beat intro and the instruments all came in at once. The synthesizer played the strings while the drums chimed with the snare drums, and the tom-tom drums. The distortion of the electric guitar decorated the introduction.

Then the sound died down. And the song started with it.

“Today – just like yesterday – I walk the same streets –”

Lee HyunAh’s deep voice decorated the first part. She had closed her eyes and the mic was on a stand and she sang in her unique bass tone.

Since the speakers were at the back, KangYoon was at the front near the mixer, where he was able to listen to the song clearly. KangYoon listened in and looked at the notes at the same time. The bass and the drums, guitar, and the synthesizer harmonized and created white light.

However....

‘Grey? What’s that?’

KangYoon doubted his eyes. Yes, the light was definitely white. However, a tinge of grey was inside that light. The song he was hearing was definitely alright. However, the stuffy feeling in his heart definitely reminded him that it was indeed grey amongst that white.

“The cold winds – distract us – from sleep –”

Lee HyunAh’s voice rose higher and she exerted more power into her voice. The light became stronger as well. However, the grey tinge in the light showed no signs of disappearing. It was like a flaw in high-class jade. The white had a tinge of grey.

‘This is a first.’

KangYoon slightly panicked. The entire song had a tinge of grey to it. KangYoon turned his gaze around to the musical notes. They were all consistent. He turned around to see Lee HyunAh to see if there was anything up with her, but she had no problems either. All the notes were stable and consistent, and the song wasn’t flawed either.

At the climax part, Lee HyunAh raised her voice to her limits. It was a very high-pitched tone. Her charming voice that her fans liked, rang out in the studio. However, the grey light did not disappear.

KangYoon alternated his gaze between the score and the band members. The cause of the grey light could not be found very easily.

‘Is the arrangement done wrong? Or is it the singing style? No, the combination of the instruments is not bad at all. It’s the vocals.’

Fortunately, he would soon discover that the problem lay in Lee HyunAh. After the climax, the song went into the chorus again, but there was a short instrumental part before that. It was when Lee HyunAh was not singing that the grey light weakened. The overall light became weaker, but the grey light had disappeared as well.

‘The vocal’s singing method doesn’t match the instruments. Well, this is a rock-ballad and I feel like the voice isn’t powerful enough. The initial deep tone is good, but she slowly loses power over time.’

KangYoon came to a conclusion. Then he recorded what he saw into a memo.

“How was it?”

After the song finished, Lee HyunAh heaved a deep breath before asking KangYoon.

“Let’s try one more time.”

“Eh? One more time?”

“It just feels off for some reason. I’m sorry but can you just play it one more time?”

Just in case, KangYoon asked for one more try. White Moonlight heeded his words.

The song began again, but the results weren’t different from before. The red musical notes created a strong white light but with a tinge of grey.

“Oppa?”

“Huh? Oh....”

When KangYoon didn’t say anything even after the song was

over, Lee HyunAh called out to KangYoon.

“Sorry, I’m just thinking about something.”

Lee HyunAh felt as though KangYoon didn’t like the song. She came to him and asked.

“Is the song that bad?”

“Rather than that, there’s something that tugs at my mind.”

The tinge of grey light among the strong white light kept tugging at KangYoon’s mind. Until now, it was either grey or white, not a mix of both. This was the first time such a thing has happened.

‘What could the problem be?’

There were no problems from what he was hearing. The members of the band should have called for KangYoon since they thought this was good enough. Lee HyunAh included.

“Which part is strange?”

“Why don’t you try changing your singing style?”

“My singing style?”

Lee HyunAh tilted her head. KangYoon spoke of the reason calmly.

“In my opinion, the instruments are powerful, but the vocals are relatively weak in comparison. You did well for the arrangement though.”

“Okay. Should I try growling?”

“No, the deeper parts are fine. There’s no reason to scratch your voice to try and create a deeper sound. In my opinion, I think you should exert more power on the higher parts. Let’s go with shouting.”

“I’m not very good at shouting though....”

Lee HyunAh was worried. Singers had their own styles of singing. Lee HyunAh was talented in the lower tones and was

freely able to use growling to create a thicker voice, but things like shouting, where she had to shout with practically all her might, was not her forte. However, she hesitated after seeing KangYoon requesting that of her.

“Think of it as learning another skill. If you can’t do it by yourself, I’ll get you a trainer.”

“Ooh, you’re the best, oppa!”

However, Lee HyunAh became brighter after hearing that she would even get a trainer. KangYoon felt that this emotional girl was quite cute.

“I appreciate that. So, let’s delay the recording for another week. Is that fine?”

“Yes. I’ll tell you once I don’t seem to be able to do it by myself.”

“Okay.”

KangYoon finished his words and left the studio. Then, he thought of something and called Lee HyunAh out.

“Is there something you want to talk about?”

“Not much, it’s just the way you call me.”

“The way I call you?”

While Lee HyunAh tilted her head, KangYoon spoke.

“This is a company. You might find it rather disappointing, but I think I need to set this straight. I’m the President, and you’re a celebrity belonging to the company. If you keep calling me oppa like this, then it might make us sound close, but once the company grows, then it will be bad for the morale. I want you to keep that in mind.”

“Oh, yeah. I didn’t think about that. I’m sorry.”

“No, just be careful from now on. Then once you’re done, tell me.”

“Yes.”

After this business, KangYoon went downstairs. He was going to take a look at Kim JiMin’s practice.

“I did that on purpose though. Did I push it too far? Tch.”

Looking at KangYoon going down the stairs, Lee HyunAh pouted.

Chapter 93. The Appearance of The Formidables, White Moonlight (3)

JungMinAhFantasia: When is our MinAh coming back from America T_T

WhenSeoYuBlossoms: I want to see HanYu... T_T

MyGirlJennie: I wanna hear some savory dialects....

HanJooYeonFlower: Guys, give it up. MG went crazy so Eddios isn't coming back.

That was the recent chat log in the Eddios official fan café, Aries. The fans chatted about what they wanted. The chat log scrolled down endlessly, and people gave their opinions about the members of Eddios.

WoofLilyBesto: When is our Eddios coming back to Korea? Anyone know? T_T

RisIsRinse: They aren't coming back until they renew their contracts. AKA, never.

MinAhItsOppa: If it's the MG of now, then they would happily do that. You all know how Eddios is being treated like by MG.

RisILoveYou: Urgh, you remind us of some bad memories. Even DiaTeen, who are relatively less-known than them, are doing solo concerts. But Eddios never got theirs. They go to events like hell.... And now they're in America. Just how much pain must they go through?

SeoYouBeMine: Eddios is a sacrifice card..... they're planning to throw them out after using them as experiments in America.

The fan club was bustling with Eddios's lifestyle in America. Everyone sighed saying that they lost fans who dearly longed for them to come back, even though they spent one entire year in America without any results.

MarryMeLily: Last year there were 300 thousand members here, but right now there's less than half of that. It will only keep decreasing. They will be forgotten.

Eddios4ever: No, that can't be....

The chat log kept going down with worries about Eddios. However, there didn't seem to be a proper course of action they could take. They could only wait for the members to individually upload news to their social networking accounts and spread those around.

'The funds right now....'

KangYoon was in deep thought about money and the location of the concert venue. Although Yeonnam-dong was less expensive than Hongdae, it couldn't be considered cheap. It was still in Seoul after all. Moreover, there was the price of equipment as well. Lee HyunJi wasn't joking when she said that they'd need to spend all the emergency funds as well.

However, this investment was a necessary one. It may be hard in the short term, but in the long term, everything would get better including the public image of the band as well as their financial situation.

"There isn't a suitable place."

After a bout with the estate agents, KangYoon just stood up. He investigated private trades and even estate agents, but it was hard to find a good place. A reasonably priced one was too far away from the public, and a good location made the building more expensive. He needed a suitable place.

"Then why don't we just sell this place and move our company near Hongdae?"

KangYoon shook his head at Lee HyunJi's question.

“We just need a concert venue. We don’t need such a large building yet. If we want to maintain such a building, we’ll be making losses.”

“That’s true. Haa... this is hard.”

Lee HyunJi sighed as well. Whether it was for a home or a company, buying a house was a tough thing.

In the end, KangYoon closed the internet window. Although he even looked through some auctions, he couldn’t find a suitably priced building. He thought that he should delay this for a later date and started doing something else.

At that time, Lee HyunJi spoke to KangYoon.

“Don’t we need another singer?”

“A singer? Well, just White Moonlight is insufficient. I was thinking about it, but I don’t know if we have the luxury to raise another one.”

“How about an immediate fighting power?”

“I’m not sure if we can afford one like that.”

(T/N: Author is referring to ‘singer’ both as an individual singer (like Jay Han), and group idols (like Eddios)) KangYoon agreed to what Lee HyunJi said, but at the same time, he was worried. To do that, he would have to look for one in the contract renewal season, but it was obvious that singers would want better conditions and treatment than where they were before. Right now, when they had a lot of things to invest into, including the concert venue, KangYoon was skeptical about getting a new singer.

“Shouldn’t we be able to find one, president? I believe in you.”

“.....”

KangYoon ended up shrugging his shoulders at Lee HyunJi’s joking words.

After he finished a piece of work, KangYoon headed to the

practice studio for White Moonlight. When he opened the door, Lee HyunAh was singing in a more refreshing-feeling voice than before. However, KangYoon still wasn't satisfied.

‘The grey is still there.’

Although it was much fainter than before, there was still a tinge of grey in the light. Lee HyunAh's note had turned from red to blue.

‘Her notes aren't stable. Is it because she's not used to it yet?’

Compared to the relatively stable and consistent notes from the instruments, Lee HyunAh's notes weren't that consistent. Although the song had become more natural and refreshing, there were still some ways to go.

After the song was over, the members of the band waved their hands towards KangYoon. Lee HyunAh immediately asked KangYoon about the song.

“I want it to feel more... refreshing. I think the vocals are still a bit stuffy.”

“Is it....”

Lee HyunAh became dejected. It was quite sad to hear KangYoon saying that outright.

“But it's much better than before. Let's practice it a little more.”

“Yes.”

The song resumed again. Lee HyunAh started humming along with the instruments.

“Aaaah— aaaaah——”

KangYoon focused his eyes. But then, he started seeing something else. Originally, there was a tinge of grey in the white, but the grey thinned out and he could see silver. The humming added strength to that silver and the silver became thicker.

However, after the humming was over, the silver disappeared, and when Lee HyunAh started singing, the white light had the original tinge of grey.

“Wait.”

KangYoon raised his hand to halt their practice. Everyone stopped in confusion.

“What is it?”

“Can you do the humming again with the instruments?”

Lee HyunAh understood and signaled with her hand. Along with the drum beats, they started playing again.

“Aaah— aaaah——”

“!!!!!!”

He wasn’t wrong. This clear, refreshing feeling, it was definitely silver. The silver among the white light enlarged until the humming ended and disappeared when Lee HyunAh began singing.

‘This is it, this was the focal point.’

KangYoon halted the song.

“Did we do something wrong?”

“You know this part where the first verse comes in after the introduction. Why don’t we try changing it a little?”

“How?”

Lee HyunAh brought the score right away. KangYoon increased the humming by around 2 seconds and added a crescendo so that the sound would be louder. On top of that, he added more drum sounds and even added more bass line. He even switched the synthesizer strings to sound grander.

“Isn’t this too big for the intro? That’s a lot of power.”

“It’s a rock song. You will have to exert more power in the first

verse as well.”

Lee HyunAh said okay and gave everyone the changed score. Then, they started playing again.

“Aaah— aaaah——”

With the crescendo, the sound became more grand and hefty. Along with that, the silver part of the light started increasing until it reached around 1/3 of the total. Now he was able to see the silver at a glance. The low drums and the bass made the music very loud just as though the climax part would. And then the sounds faded out.

“Today – just like yesterday – I walk the same streets –”

However, the light fading was less than before. Lee HyunAh’s voice was much louder than before as well. The silver light that had disappeared also remained behind this time and added to the beauty.

‘This is it!’

KangYoon gripped his fists. Although it was a bit of a pity that the silver light didn’t extend to all the light, but this kind of refreshing feeling gave him satisfaction.

When the song reached its climax, the silver was around 1/2 of the light. This was thanks to Lee HyunAh’s voice. Thanks to the silver light, KangYoon had a smile on his face all the time.

After the song finished, Lee HyunAh asked KangYoon who was smiling.

“Oppa, why are you laughing like that?”

“Oh, it’s just that the song is good.”

“Pfft, really? Is this good enough?”

“Yeah, it was the best.”

“Yay!”

Everyone in White Moonlight cheered. Their hard discussions and arrangements had finally come to an end.

“Well, then. Let’s go record.”

“R... right now?”

Lee HyunAh asked in an exhausted voice. She thought that rest was finally here, but KangYoon was so Spartan....

KangYoon only laughed while looking at their expressions.

In Hongdae, there are 7 places, clubs, that are called the holy places of indie concerts. Derrace, Greenlight, Livestart, Sweetpins, Spothall. Hongdae Box, and Spareman. These 7 places had held concerts ever since indie bands was a thing.

Greenlight was the place that opened the earliest. And today, White Moonlight was here.

“This is the most expensive one out of all the clubs. Man, the president is quite generous.”

After finishing a round of rehearsal, Kim JinDae was tapping on the drum pads in one corner of the waiting room. He was getting warmed up. Beside him was Lee ChaHee with a 5-string bass doing chromatic exercise.

“I think he spends when he has to. I was worried that they might be stingy with spending.”

“Me too. Isn’t the company going to go down at this rate?”

“Looking at the director or the president, I don’t think so. Both work so well.”

Lee ChaHee shook her head at Kim JinDae’s question. The two were conversing while exercising their hands.

“Aah—aaaaaah—aaaaaaaah—”

Lee HyunAh was warming up her voice in front of them. From

low to high, then back low again. She was loosening the tension in her neck. Jung ChanGyu was also doing chromatics by her side.

At that moment, a group of people came through the door. It was a lady around the same height as Lee HyunAh, as well as a group of men. The woman spoke in delight after looking at Lee HyunAh.

“HyunAh!”

“HyoJi-unni?”

The lady hopped around in delight while grabbing Lee HyunAh’s hand. Lee HyunAh also greeted her with a smile. However, the members of the band behind her didn’t seem to like her that much.

‘Hey, it’s Jang HyoJi, that fiery fox.’

‘It’s that bitch again?’

Kim JinDae and Lee ChaHee shook their heads while looking at the woman called Jang HyoJi. They frowned as though they didn’t like her at all.

‘I heard she went to Yerang after disbanding her band.’

‘That’s a famous story. I heard that she didn’t bat an eyelid.’

‘That’s amazing in a way. How can she do that with a face like that?’

‘JinDae-oppa, get yourself together. Sheesh, men.’

Lee ChaHee poked Kim JinDae’s side. Kim JinDae twitched.

‘Why? She’s indeed pretty. She’s one of the goddesses of Hongdae.’

‘What goddess. HyunAh is much better than her.’

Lee ChaHee didn’t take her eyes off her bass guitar. After doing chromatics, she started relieving her stress with slapping techniques. The sound of her thumb striking the guitar neck was very loud, but she didn’t care at all.

“Unni, you had a concert today?”

“Yeah, today’s the last day here. Although it’s unfortunate, the company wants me to focus on TV programmes. What can I do? I can’t help it.”

“Congratulations.”

“Thanks. But I’m happy to do a last concert with you. HyunAh, I do wish to see you more often, after all. Oh, it will be hard, won’t it? We wouldn’t be able to see each other on TV programmes.”

“.....”

It was an indirect disdain. A vein popped on Lee HyunAh’s forehead.

“No way. We aren’t that small, you know?”

“Really? That’s good. I was worried you know? I thought that you sacrificed too much for the band members and went to a small company. I have a lot of deposit from the contract this time. Let’s eat together sometimes.”

“Sounds good to me.”

Lee HyunAh said that without a hint of her true feelings. However, Jang HyoJi seemingly didn’t realize and continued to speak.

“Call me anytime.”

“You don’t need to worry about me.”

“Quite proud, are you? I’m off then. See you later.”

Jang HyoJi gave Lee HyunAh a hug while smiling before leaving.

“Ah, dammit. Does she even care about her own former members? I should just crush her face....”

Lee ChaHee seemed frustrated and stood up after putting the bass down. At this rate, it appears she would follow suit and give her a beating. Kim JinDae was shocked and held her back.

“Stop it. You’ll get wrinkles.”

“I don’t have any.”

“I’m just saying you’ll get some.”

The two started quarreling again.

Meanwhile, Lee HyunAh was sighing in secret. She just found out that the person Yerang chose to replace her was Jang HyoJi. She was a long-time rival of hers. They debuted at Hongdae at similar times, and their popularity and even the band was like her own. But they parted ways and crossed paths here. Jang HyoJi chose to go by herself, while she chose the band.

‘I... did a good thing, right?’

She didn’t hesitate when she was deciding it. However, when she saw Jang HyoJi, her heart shook. Not knowing what she was thinking, the members of the band were all talking bad about her.

At that moment, KangYoon entered through the door.

“Are you guys ready?”

“Yes.”

The members of the band replied with intense vitality. Lee HyunAh also came to herself and replied. KangYoon was satisfied to hear that and spoke.

“Good, you know that you guys are the last, right?”

“Huh? Are we? Weren’t we going 4th?”

When Kim JinDae asked back, KangYoon shook his head and replied to him.

“I heard you guys were the top dogs in indie bands. I can’t let you guys drop out of that place. I used some of my power and influence.”

“Oooh.”

Everyone exclaimed at KangYoon’s skills. KangYoon continued to speak.

“Jang HyoJi? They were quite noisy, but I said that we brought a new song. When I asked which group they had more expectations for the staff here sided with us. Jang HyoJi’s up first, while we’re last. That’s how we negotiated.”

“Wasn’t Jang HyoJi persistent about it? She loves last place.”

When Lee HyunAh asked, KangYoon said while remembering what happened.

“Don’t even start. She talked about how she’s from Yerang and that this won’t do, and sheesh... like what she said, a guy from Yerang came to me and we had a fight. As you see, we won. I heard that she went to Yerang by herself. They should be managing her image when she had taken the risk to abandon her team. I mentioned that and this together, and the guy from Yerang became quiet.”

“Pfft.”

Lee HyunAh’s expression became brighter. The other members were giggling as well. In the end, the reason Jang HyoJi visited them was because of KangYoon. She only came to them to vent her frustration.

“I knew it....”

“Knew what?”

“O.... oresident is the best. The best!”

“What the hell is an oresident. Some kind of oreo?” (T/N: Oppa + president) Seeing KangYoon do so much for them, Lee HyunAh decide that she would never regret going to World Entertainment ever again.

‘It was the best choice I’ve ever made.’

Her hesitation was relieved, and she delightfully prepared to go to the stage.

Chapter 94. The Appearance of The Formidables, White Moonlight (4)

Kim JiMin was currently at the concert venue ‘Greenlight’ along with Lee HyunJi and professor Choi ChanYang.

“Wow....”

Seeing an indie concert for the first time was a wonder itself for her. The stage that was underground, as well as the lights. Everything was like a new world to her.

“Professor. Is HyunAh-unni going to perform up there?”

“Yeah. She’s up last.”

“That’s amazing. The unni I always see at the office is going to perform there...”

“Pfft.”

Lee HyunJi burst out laughing after hearing those words. Girls around Kim JiMin’s age would giggle at almost anything.

“Oh, dear JiMin. What can I do about your cuteness?”

Lee HyunJi lightly pinched Kim JiMin’s cheeks.

“Ii hursh (It hurts).”

While the three were waiting for the concert to start, the lights started dimming. The stage was about to begin.

“It’s starting.”

Just as Lee HyunJi said, the lights on the stage brightened and a male presenter walked out. He introduced the concert casually and briefly; and spoke about the singers and that would appear today. The lights then dimmed again, and the sound of footsteps could be heard.

Then the lights turned on again.

“Whoaaa— “

“Hello? It’s Jang HyoJi.”

Amongst the cheers of the audience, Jang HyoJi took a deep bow. Then, the band at the back of the stage started playing and made the audience clap according to the beat.

“Uoooooh—!”

It was very short but was enough to draw out the reaction from the audience. These people were here to enjoy the concert, so they only needed to be fanned slightly and they would jump to the beat.

“It’s a nice day today. Should we do that again?”

Jang HyoJi heightened the mood with another round. Since all of these people had come here ready to play around, everyone jumped in unison. And after she judged that it was around time, she gave a signal to the drums. Then, the drums started playing some light beats and the bass started the song. It was a fun song with a fast beat.

“Set fire – to the boring life – and go on a —“

“Uoooooh!”

The lyrics spoke for the people, while the fun beats made them jump. Jang HyoJi’s hefty and powerful voice gave a refreshing feeling to the audience.

“Waaaah—!”

Kim JiMin also jumped with the rest of the audience. Lee HyunJi by her side did the same. Professor Choi ChanYang waved his hands in the air and enjoyed it in his own style.

The song slowly reached its climax.

“I wish to – go back to the days – I was happy about small things —!”

Jang HyoJi shouted the lyrics. Both the music and the audience

reached their climax. Everyone became one and jumped in unison. Their reactions were, needless to say, amazing.

“Thank you. Should we do that one more time?”

“Waah—!”

In the following song, Jang HyoJi again sang a song that had a fast 16-beat tempo and the audience jumped around again.

“Her stage manners are definitely okay.”

President Kang ShiMyoung of Yerang Entertainment was currently at the back of the audience seats watching Jang HyoJi’s stage. Beside him was chief Min JoongSup of the scouting team with a nervous expression.

(T/N: Yerang is the place that tried to steal KY off MG. Their president was the burly guy.)

“Sh... she’s definitely capable. There’s no need to talk about her manners.”

“That seems to be the case.”

President Kang ShiMyung narrowed his eyes and watched Jang HyoJi’s stage until the very end. Jang HyoJi didn’t take her eyes off the audience until the end, and she had very good concentration. She was an overall good singer. However, he kept shaking his head as though she was lacking.

“She’s good, but it’s a bit of a pity. She’s lacking when compared to the girl called Lee HyunAh. She’s bright, but she doesn’t shine.”

“But... Lee HyunAh said that she won’t come unless we accept the entire band....”

“That can’t be helped. Our budget doesn’t allow that.... Oh yes, I heard that HyunAh that girl also signed a contract.”

“It’s called World Entertainment.”

“World?”

For President Kang ShiMyoung, this was something he heard for the first time. He tilted his head.

“It’s a newly made company. Their first singer is Lee HyunAh as well. So that’s why they accepted her condition to accept the entire band.”

“Looks like they’ll go down pretty soon. It’s not like affection earns money.”

“Exactly.”

When they talked for quite a while, the stage ended. Jang HyoJi exited amongst the cheers of the audience. The next band continued with the mood that Jang HyoJi had set up but was lacking compared to Jang HyoJi.

President Kang ShiMyoung crossed his arms and watched the stage.

“She is definitely the best out of all of them.”

The words President Kang ShiMyoung spoke after the fourth band ended made chief Min JoongSup smile. His scouting was acknowledged by the president.

“This is good. Let’s see. The last in order is White Moonlight? Weren’t they called The Formidables before?”

“Yes. They were called that last time, but I think they changed the name.”

“Looks like the company made them change it. Well, it’s better than what it was before.”

President Kang ShiMyoung watched the stage with a blank expression. This band had rejected his offer, in the end, he didn’t have good feelings about them.

The stage lights dimmed, and the last team was getting ready. The sounds of tapping and the occasional sounds of tuning could

be heard. This was the fun in small clubs. The lights brightened again and shone on Lee HyunAh, who was at the center.

“Hello! I’m Lee HyunAh from White Moonlight, our new name for the band, The Formidables.”

“Waaaaaaaah” —-

As to reflect Lee HyunAh’s status as the Hongdae goddess, the reactions from the audience were very hot. Lee HyunAh commented that she was excited to show them a new song. The people’s eye’s shined in expectation after hearing that there was a new song.

“You jumped for a while until now. Consider it as resting for a small while. Then let’s begin.”

Lee HyunAh clicked her fingers towards the drums. Then, Kim JinDae tapped the sticks together to set the beat and then beat on the tom-tom drums. The other instruments started playing.

“Aaah— Aaaah—-

People raised their hands while listening to Lee HyunAh’s humming. They were tired after jumping around all this time. They turned their phone screens on and waved their phone lights.

“Today – just like yesterday – I walk the same streets –”

The grand instrumental faded out, and Lee HyunAh started singing. The refreshing singing style added taste to the song.

As the song progressed, the people started falling into her voice. Some people fell into the deep emotion and teared up as well. It started happening in one of the front rows and it spread around to the others.

The drums that only set the beat started getting louder while the bass and electric guitars raised their volumes and heightened the mood. Lee HyunAh’s voice resounded across the stage. The people raised their hands and followed along with the singing.

“whenever – wherever–”

The drums changed to an offbeat accent, while the bass heightened the mood even more. The distortion effect decorated the surroundings and made Lee HyunAh’s voice shine. The people reacted even more passionately. As though affected, Lee HyunAh took out the mic from the stand.

“Blossom beautifully again ——Aaaah—”

“Waaaah—-!”

The drummer played all the drums, including snares, tom-toms, rides, and gave a decorative effect, and the rest of the instruments all boasted their skills as well. The audience reacted passionately, as though they hadn’t jumped around this entire time. Their voices had already gone hoarse, but they still shouted, and jumped. Everyone seemed to be crazy about the song.

Lee HyunAh sang some more songs. She never knew that she would receive such a passionate reaction from the audience. She received energy from the audience and exploded with power.

After a fancy round of instrumental skills, their new song ended and introduced itself fully to the world.

‘Ha.... Haha.’

President Kang ShiMyoung, who was watching from the back shivered in frustration. Min JoongSup, who was by his side, gulped and couldn’t stop being nervous.

The exclusive producer for MG Entertainment, producer Oh JiWan, didn’t feel good recently. Ever since chairman Won JinMoon collapsed, the company was centralized around the director’s association and the company went in a strange direction. Thanks to that, he, who only had work centered around recording before, now had to manage trainees and do other things as well.

But today was the day he relieved his stress. He had a schedule in Gangnam with a close friend of his that had just come back from the military. He left the company early and headed to the place.

“JaeHoon.”

“Hyung, it’s been a while.”

When he arrived at the bar, an ordinary-looking man with very short hair was walking around. Producer Oh JiWan greeted him and entered the bar.

The bar was room-style (had several private rooms). The two ordered quickly and poured each other some alcohol. When they drank, they started talking.

“Wow, Kim JaeHoon. How long has it been?”

“It’s been 2 years. We met just before I went to the military.”

“You vicious little prick. You didn’t even call me once during your leave.”

“Sorry. I just... didn’t have the leisure to.”

The guy called Kim JaeHoon poured alcohol while saying sorry. Seeing him apologize with a very sorry face, producer Oh JiWan said that it was okay, and they clashed glasses. Along with the glass clashing sound, the two emptied their glasses in one go.

The two had met after such a long time and started talking about various things. Military, the entertainment world, etc. There were a lot of things to talk about.

Producer Oh JiWan, whose face reddened after drinking so much, asked carefully.

“JaeHoon. Are you looking for a management company?”

“Not yet. I can’t trust anyone so easily.”

“Well, yeah. If you’ve met those guys, then it couldn’t be helped that you think so.”

Producer Oh JiWan frowned in displeasure.

“Those damned guys. They did nothing, and they want three times the contract deposit. How does that make any sense?”

“They didn’t even pay for the rearrangement fees and the concert profit. And they canceled the contract outright....”

“What happened to the lawsuit?”

“.....”

Kim JaeHon lowered his head implying that the results weren’t good. Producer Oh JiWan had nothing to say either.

“I just.... Want to sing without thinking about anything else. Just sing....”

Kim JaeHoon truly wished to do that. 2 years of lawsuit plus 2 years of military. He hadn’t stood on a stage for four years. Moreover, the result of the long lawsuit was terrible. His expression behind his smile was colored in demise.

Producer Oh JiWan couldn’t easily say anything either. Is there really a company that is willing to accept him? Yes, his singing skills were top-notch. However, there was a 4-year gap. And what about the money problem? Is there really a company that is willing to accept him despite all those risks?

Well, maybe it would be possible if it’s the three big companies with a lot of funds.

“Did you contact places like Yerang?”

“Yes.”

“What did they say?”

Kim JaeHoon shook his head. Meaning that it was no good.

‘If Yerang said no, then what about us? No, the company’s doing horrible nowadays. It would be better to go to the place President Lee HyunJi set up.... Oh, wait.’

Something flashed by in producer Oh JiWan's head. The new company that Lee HyunJi and KangYoon built. Although their scale was small, he felt that they would be okay.

“JaeHoon. The scale of the company doesn't matter, right?”

“A company is a necessary evil.”

“Y... yeah. Anyway. I have a place to recommend to you....”

Producer Oh JiWan started talking about World Entertainment with him.

“That was awesome. Ah, The Formidables are the best.”

“It's White Moonlight. They changed their name.”

“Whatever, same thing. Anyway, they're so cool. Ah, HyunAh-unni....”

After the whole concert was over, the audience left the concert hall like a receding tide. The concert venue was emptied in an instant. However, the heat from the concert still remained behind.

Inside the empty concert hall, President Kang ShiMyoung stood there quietly.

“That's a pity. Really, it is.”

President Kang ShiMyoung remembered back to the last stage by White Moonlight. Even the tired people waved their hands and shouted. Even he, who was used to this after visiting countless stages, fell to it. The fact that he couldn't get Lee HyunAh to join his company was painful.

At that time, he saw KangYoon who was looking at the stage. President Kang ShiMyoung approached him.

“Mr. Lee KangYoon.”

“President Kang ShiMyoung”

“So you still remember me.”

President Kang ShiMyoung. KangYoon shook his hand and took a bow. KangYoon never thought that he'd see him here.

“You aren't someone I see frequently. What brought you here?”

“Oh, I came here for a singer from my company.”

“Oh, I've heard that you were doing a new business with President Lee HyunJi. So, it's about that.”

“Yes.”

KangYoon acknowledged that but didn't reveal any more.

Just as President Kang ShiMyoung was about to ask more, Lee HyunAh and the band left the waiting room.

“O...resident! We're ready.”

“Okay, let's go. Then I shall take my leave.”

“Lee HyunAh? Wait. Your work was... wait.”

President Kang ShiMyoung's expression turned strange. He had heard that Lee HyunAh joined a company. She called KangYoon... ‘oresident’? or something. The situation was simple. KangYoon scouted Lee HyunAh and the band.

“Ha.... Haha.’

“Then I shall take my leave.”

“S... sure.”

KangYoon shook hands with the panicking President Kang ShiMyoung and left the venue with White Moonlight.

“Haha... ha. Lee KangYoon. It's that guy. Interesting.”

Seeing KangYoon leaving the venue, President Kang ShiMyoung muttered in a low voice.

“Chief Min.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Did you say World Entertainment?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Investigate everything about them and bring it to me.”

President Kang ShiMyoung continued looking at the door that KangYoon had just left through and narrowed his eyes.

Chapter 95. Spreading the Broken Wings (1)

White Moonlight's stage was successful.

Midnight that day.

They released the music file and created reservations for the album.

They gave out sample albums to CD stores across the country and released the concert video on their homepage as well to advertise them.

Lee HyunJi's expression stiffened after looking at the current state of the album from Jung HyeJin.

"Looks like we'll definitely need a concert venue."

Lee HyunJi grumbled as the sales and the concert income was not satisfactory. KangYoon was no different in his opinion and spoke while crossing his arms.

"The album sales are proportionate to the concert income."

"Yes. Seeing as how the fans are buying the album, it appears the number of concerts they do is important."

"So, it all comes down to publicity. Looks like the clubs know this well. That's why the rent is so high."

Doing business required smarts. KangYoon exclaimed at the meticulous calculations of those club owners and sighed. Lee HyunJi put down the papers and continued to speak.

"It looks like we'll need to do at least two concerts a week. However, there are many indie bands and not enough concert venues. The other bands should also know about that as well. Even if we want to do a street performance, bands need permission as well.... It's quite complicated."

"So, it all comes down to our own exclusive concert venue."

“Yes. Do you still not like any of them?”

KangYoon shook his head at Lee HyunJi’s question.

“I think it will be better to buy one even if I don’t think we should. If we miss the opportunity, it might come to nothing.

“Yes. Next....”

At that moment, Lee HyunJi’s phone started ringing. She apologized and took the call.

“Oh, producer Oh. It’s been a while.”

The call was from producer Oh JiWan. She expressed joy from listening to a voice she hadn’t heard for quite some time. After catching up with each other about normal stuff, Lee HyunJi’s expression turned strange for the rest of the call.

“Did something happen?”

“It’s producer Oh.”

“Really? What happened?”

It was rare to see Lee HyunJi at a loss about what to do. KangYoon was curious.

“It sounds like he has something to talk to me about, but he didn’t go any further about it. From what I got, he seemed to want to ask me a favor....”

“A favor, huh? Is it a personal one?”

“I don’t think so. We owe a lot to producer Oh, so let’s meet him.”

When KangYoon asked about the schedule, Lee HyunJi said that it was tomorrow evening. KangYoon returned to his seat after telling her that she should tell him about it if it was related to the company.

The same evening.

Only after Kim JiMin finished her practice and left did

KangYoon's business day finish. Just as KangYoon was about to leave the office after locking down, he saw someone familiar near the entrance.

“HyunAh.”

“Pre....ppa?” (President + Oppa)

“...What the heck does that mean now....”

She seemed to have resentments about what happened last time. KangYoon laughed. Lee HyunAh said that she had someone to meet after separating with the rest of the band.

“Don't play around too late.”

“Do you want to go together?”

Just as KangYoon was about to go, Lee HyunAh held him back.

“Me? Nah. It's fine.”

“I'm meeting up with SoYoung. You're close to her, aren't you?”

She was referring to HeeYoon's friend, Park SoYoung. There was no way KangYoon wouldn't know about her.

“Is it just the two of you?”

“Yes, that's good. Treat us to something good.”

“.....”

In the end, KangYoon had to wait for Park SoYoung with Lee HyunAh due to her clinging. He also treated this as a reward for the successful concert this time. After he waited for a little, Park SoYoung left the bus and ran up to them.

“Unni!”

“SoYoung~~!”

The two seemed to be delighted as they held hands and hopped around.

“Unni, you're so pretty. How do you do your makeup?”

“You too, you too. What tint do you use?”

“.....”

KangYoon couldn't say anything as the girls were flattering each other. He never understood how women thought. Without a clue of what he was thinking, the two looked at KangYoon and Park SoYoung looked delighted to see him.

“Oppa, hello.”

“Yes. How have you been?”

“I'm doing fine. Hey, you look good? You were totally burnt black when you were in America.”

KangYoon tapped her shoulders after hearing that light prank.

The three-headed to a nearby bar. Although they wanted to head to a café, none of them were open as it was late. Having arrived at a bar, the three found a table at a corner.

“Is HeeYoon doing well?”

“Yeah. It seems like she likes college. She sends me pictures all the time.”

KangYoon showed them the photos that HeeYoon sent him. They were full of pictures of HeeYoon taking pictures of African-American professors to Asian, as well as Caucasian people.

“I'm so envious. I want to study in America too....”

Park SoYoung's eyes shined. She was envious of HeeYoon, who was the same age as her and had the opportunity to study in America. Park SoYoung was stimulated from time to time when she thought about HeeYoon, who was a weak little girl before, doing so well.

After talking about HeeYoon for a while, they talked about music. Park SoYoung was shocked after hearing that White Moonlight's title song this time, named Walking on the Road, was composed by HeeYoon.

“No way....”

“What is?”

“Is HeeYoon a genius? She’s already composing songs?”

“The arrangement was done by HyunAh. She only made the melody.”

KangYoon said that as though it was nothing, but that was not what it sounded like to Park SoYoung. She had heard that music was something innate, but HeeYoon seemed to be just that. HeeYoon used to be weak, so she also thought that God was fair.

After talking about the song for some time, KangYoon stood up saying that he needed to go to the bathroom.

“Ah... what have I been doing all this time?”

When KangYoon left, Park SoYoung felt slightly dejected. Her friend was miles ahead of her, but she was merely so-so. Their difference in position was clear.

Lee HyunAh consoled her junior.

“It’s brother like sister. How much do you think KangYoon-oppa cares about her? I heard a bit from the director, but the two had a hard time in America, didn’t they?”

“That’s true but.... I’m fine with hardships so I also want to become like HeeYoon.”

“That’s not gonna happen in one day. For now, just focus on doing your homework.”

“I know that.... But I’m still envious. HeeYoon turned out to be a genius!”

“Honestly, I’m envious as well. A genius sister and a brother who knows that. Oh, how nice it would have been if I had a brother like that.”

“Isn’t it like a movie? The brother is some cool handsome dude,

too. Looks like HeeYoon will forever be single.”

“Hahaha, why? Because she will have too high standards?”

While the two were talking about HeeYoon, KangYoon came back.

“What is it? Are you talking something interesting without me?”

“Well, who knows?”

KangYoon ended up laughing hearing Lee HyunAh’s joking words.

After drinking, the three left the bar. As it was late, the women grabbed taxis “Then I’ll take my leave here.”

“Be careful on your way home.”

The two women headed to their homes in the taxi. Even inside the taxi, the two girls didn’t stop talking.

“Unni. Can I bring you a song next time?”

“Sure. If I listen to it and if it’s good, I’ll use it.”

“Really? Promise?”

When Park SoYoung got excited, Lee HyunAh poured cold water on her.

“But you need to get KangYoon-oppa’s permission as well.”

“Urgh.... It’ll be hard to get his permission.”

Lee HyunAh burst out laughing after seeing Park SoYoung so unconfident.

“Here it is.”

“Thanks for your work.”

President Kang ShiMyoung received the papers that a female secretary brought him. The title of the paper was ‘Recent state of affairs of World Entertainment and White Moonlight’. He flipped

through each page while he corrected his glasses.

‘It’s been around 3 months since they’ve started acting for real. Their main income is from the songs from the composer called Muse.... Well, yes. Muse has been a hot potato recently.’

After that episode of Korea ONE STAR, the composer Muse started spreading his name among the public as well. President Kang ShiMyoung also heard about Muse quite frequently during meetings. There were a lot of singers who wished to work with him, saying that his arrangement skills were very good. However, he put down that proposal saying that it was hard to judge him just on one song alone.

‘So, Muse was their exclusive composer. Are they a team or an individual? Is Lee KangYoon muse himself? No, no. That can’t be right. They have one trainee and one singer, that’s White Moonlight. The director... is Lee HyunJi. She’s good at doing business.’

President Kang ShiMyoung kept flipping through the pages while sipping coffee. As they were a small company right now, the amount of material was few. The paper was mostly about their source of income, groups that belonged to them, and very little things about their private lives.

“Ha, that’s interesting. Everyone’s so clean. Lee HyunAh, or their members, too. They are singers that only ate and sang, so that’s reasonable. But Lee KangYoon, this guy, just what....”

Lee KangYoon was their CEO, and that was the person he was most curious about. The fact that he accepted the entire band tugged his mind. He may have done that to accept Lee HyunAh, but it appears the rest of the band were adapting quite well.

“They’ll definitely become a hindrance to Jang HyoJi....”

In the indie world, Lee HyunAh and Jang HyoJi were rivals. It was likely that that wouldn’t change even when the two came to

major. Lee HyunAh was a bit of a pity, but the singer belonging to his company was Jang HyoJi. It was better to get rid of obstacles beforehand.

“Attacking first is the best way.”

President Kang ShiMyoung seemed to have come to a decision and pressed a bell to call the secretary. Then, he ordered the things he had in his mind.

Just as always, KangYoon and Lee HyunJi started their mornings with the coffee that Jung HyeJin brought them. They looked at their daily schedule, and when they finished, Lee HyunJi spoke.

“Producer Oh JiWan asked me something yesterday.”

“Oh, did he?”

“Yes. He wanted to introduce a singer to us.”

So, it was about an audition. They needed a singer as well. When KangYoon’s expression lightened up in expectation, Lee HyunJi shook her head. KangYoon asked doubtfully.

“What happened yesterday?”

“The thing is... the singer he was talking about has a bit of a problem.”

“A problem you say. Who is this person?”

Lee HyunJi seemed to be thirsty and emptied her coffee in one go.

“Do you know about Kim JaeHoon?”

“Kim JaeHoon? I do. He’s called a god amongst men.”

“Yes. He’s called the god of karaoke. Producer Oh JiWan introduced him. I said that you’ll be the one to judge and called him over.”

KangYoon fell into thought for a moment. Kim JaeHoon was a

very famous singer that almost everyone knew about.

‘Did Kim JaeHoon get out of military around this time? I heard that the conflict between him and his former company was very harsh. The story about how he had to pay several times his contract deposit and fell bottom-low was a hot topic. Unfortunately, he failed his lawsuit and never came back again. I don’t know what happened to him after that either.’

KangYoon remembered back to his past. If Sedy was a singer who women fell for, Kim JaeHoon was the singer who made men go crazy. His unique voice and singing style seemed easy at a glance, but it was incredibly difficult to imitate and was loved by many. However, due to a conflict with his evil management company, he was also considered a tragic singer who lost everything from money and the right to his songs.

“It seems like I’ll have to decide after I see him.”

“Yes. But I’m in a tight spot too. Accepting a singer who’s in debt.... I did tell him to come for an audition since it was Producer Oh’s request but considering our financial situation, I want to reject him.”

Lee HyunJi was skeptical. However, she said that to show gratitude to producer Oh JiWan. She didn’t think it was good to accept Kim JaeHoon right now.

A bit after lunchtime, an ordinary man wearing jeans and a baseball cap visited World Entertainment.

“Hello.”

“Hello, I’m Kim JaeHoon.”

Kim JaeHoon shook hands with KangYoon. He had an ordinary impression with a rather naïve-sounding voice. They introduced themselves lightly and sat down.

“I heard from producer Oh.”

“Yes. I’ve heard a lot from hyung-nim (Oh PD) as well.”

“Let’s talk after we listen to your song. Can you?”

Kim JaeHoon was surprised to hear KangYoon being so direct. However, he stood up and exercised his voice. After warming up a bit, he started singing.

“The day— it rained— outside—“

Kim JaeHoon’s voice had depth. KangYoon was pleasantly surprised to see the musical notes producing white light. The light was very intense.

‘So, he practiced a lot while he was in the military.’

KangYoon could tell that at a glance. There was a gap in time from going to the military, as well as the conflict with his previous company, but his voice was flawless.

After his song ended, KangYoon applauded.

“Splendid. It was the best.”

“Thank you.”

Kim JaeHoon became nervous and sat back down. No matter how good the song was, he didn’t know what KangYoon would say afterward. Most companies he went to for an audition were like that. He was tense because he didn’t know what this president would say to him.

However, the man in front of him seemed to think very differently.

“Let’s not drag this out. Should we sign the contract?”

“What?”

Was this a new type of scam?

Kim JaeHoon doubted his ears thinking that it was too easy.

Chapter 96. Spreading the Broken Wings (2)

“Right, now...?”

Kim JaeHoon was wary since he thought this went too easily. He was burnt to exhaustion due to problems with his management company until now. Even though he could sing well, it was hard to believe this situation because KangYoon straight up wanted to sign a contract.

However, seeing him hesitate, KangYoon also nodded in understanding and took a step back.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I was too excited because I heard a good song. Please excuse me.”

“...Oh, okay.”

“Here is my business card, so call me again after you think about it.”

KangYoon gave Kim JaeHoon his business card. Kim JaeHoon put the business card that said ‘CEO of World Entertainment, Lee KangYoon’ into his wallet. Kim JaeHoon asked KangYoon, who didn’t say any more.

“Do you perhaps not know... what kind of situation I’m in?”

Would he possibly not know the top news of the entertainment world right now? Kim JaeHoon asked just in case. KangYoon replied without hesitation.

“You are not in a good situation. After all, you have a 1.5 billion won (1.5 million USD) debt due to the breach of contract with your previous management company. Even after you did your military service, you....”

“Stop!”

He asked just in case, but KangYoon knew too well. It was hard hearing that story from someone else. KangYoon stopped saying

and waited.

“It’s just as you say, president. My situation is the worst right now. I won’t be of help to this company.”

“I don’t have that many conditions. Skills, and the willingness to do it. You, Mr. JaeHoon, have both.”

“.....”

That was very idealistic. However, Kim JaeHoon was in his 30s. Moreover, he had suffered all sorts of hardships. KangYoon’s words sounded like idealistic nonsense to him. He thought whether this contract would really profit this company. He was curious.

“...If you want to sign a contract with me, you’ll need a lot of money. I’m going to ask for a lot to pay my debt.”

“Well, don’t you think that I’m willing to do it because I’m going to get just as much out of you?”

Kim JaeHoon was surprised to see KangYoon so calm. It was 1.5 billion. He could ask for even more for contract deposit. But seeing him so nonchalant, he was curious. He wanted to listen to what kind of conditions this person would give him.

KangYoon urged Kim JaeHoon.

“Aren’t you having a hard time right now with all the calls?”

“.....”

Kim JaeHoon gulped. He owed the bank as he had to pay the breach of contract fee to his previous company. However, he did not have the ability pay it back. And he was being pestered by the debt owners right now. From morning till night, he received calls and even emails asking him to pay it back. Not only that, debt collectors visited his house at least twice a week. KangYoon’s words were right on the mark.

“You don’t have a management, so you probably weren’t able to

do anything. At first, you must have gone to a large company. There, those people would have measured you from various angles; whether if you are valuable enough to invest in, or not. And they should have concluded: no.”

“How would you know that?”

“If they did, you wouldn’t be here.”

Kim JaeHoon trembled as this was right on the mark. As he had to suffer because of his previous company, he wanted to join a big, stable company. However, those big companies did not accept him. After considering the latest trends, and the 4-year gap he had, they concluded that it was not worth investing 1.5 billion won to him.

KangYoon’s words were trustable. However, Kim JaeHoon didn’t sign the contract immediately. This was too big of a matter to decide in a short time.

“...Phew. I’ll contact you after I think about it.”

“Take your time I’m always open.”

Kim JaeHoon shook his head and stood up. KangYoon saw him out the company.

“I’ll call you later.”

Said Kim JaeHoon as he left. KangYoon returned to his office.

“How was the audition?”

When he returned, Lee HyunJi was there. She put down some papers on KangYoon’s desk and asked.

“His skills are as good as ever. It was top-notch.”

“Are you going to accept him, then?”

“Yes.”

“President.”

Lee HyunJi was shocked to death. She shook her hand saying that this must not happen.

“It’s 1.5 BILLION. Not million. With that kind of money, we would be able to buy a whole building if it’s not in the capital. We’re short on money now too....”

“There is that much value in investing in him.”

“He will definitely ask for more than 1.5 billion for the contract deposit. Because his debt is immense.... If we do, we would have to give up on the concert venue. When that happens, there will be detriments to our plan.”

“It will be a 3-month delay at best. In three months, we can take all that back.”

“3 months?”

Lee HyunJi shook her said that that cannot possibly come true. She believed in KangYoon, but at times like these, he sounded like he was possessed by something.

“Looks like you’ll become an evil president. Okay. What do we do about the copyrights that belong to the previous company?”

“That can’t be solved in the short term, but we’ll eventually have to get it back.”

“I’m worried because we may be creating trouble for ourselves. Since you said that you will do it, you’ll do it even if you must stamp out songs like a machine, right? I can rely on you for both the concert venue and Kim JaeHoon.... But I would hate to owe to the bank. I don’t even want to think about their debt collection methods.”

“I don’t like incurring debts either.”

KangYoon was fed up with debts. He even owed the mafia in his previous life and encountered all sorts of ways they collected their debts. He wouldn’t owe someone even if he had to.

“3 months, huh. Haha. Just how much are you trying to extort him?”

“He’ll cry blood. But he’ll also sing to his heart’s content and more, so he’ll probably like it.”

Lee HyunJi shrugged her shoulders and returned to her seat. She knew that KangYoon was the type of person who would do what he said. She believed in him.

After that, they sat down in their respective seats and started working.

“Thanks for your work.”

“Bye.”

Lee ChaHee and Lee HyunAh separated at the train station. As they headed in opposite directions, they went down opposite stairs.

“...She’s popular.”

Grumbled Lee ChaHee. On the other side of the platform, Lee HyunAh was giving out signatures to a few fans. She felt envious.

The hill felt more exhausting to walk up than usual today. The bass guitar on her back also felt heavier.

‘When would I be able to give out signatures?’

Lee HyunAh’s figure kept entering her eyes. Although they belonged to one team the center of attention was always Lee HyunAh. It would be a lie if she said she wasn’t jealous, however, she knew that Lee HyunAh had given up going to Yerang entertainment because she wanted to be together with the team.

“Sigh. Such is life, I guess.”

In the end, Lee ChaHee just shook her head. Her brain was confused with the complex range of emotions running through it.

She soon reached her home while walking. She climbed the stairs to the rooftop room. However, there was a guest in front of her

house. It was a lady in a suit.

“Who are you?”

Asked Lee ChaHee to the lady. She was the only one living in the rooftop house. The woman saw Lee ChaHee and stood up.

“Hello? My name is Min HanNa. Do you happen to be Miss Lee ChaHee?”

“Yes. I am. What is it?”

She was wary seeing a stranger at this hour. Noticing that, the Min HanNa lady started carefully speaking.

“You don’t need to be so tense, I’m not a stranger. I’m from Yerang entertainment.”

“Ye....rang?”

“I’m here scout you out.”

Lee ChaHee widened her eyes. A scout? This was out of her expectations. Min HanNa gave her the papers she had brought.

“Your last concert was very impressive. The slap technique at the chorus part was very good.”

“Oh, that’s....”

“Don’t you need a proper stage? If you have any thoughts, then please contact us through this number.”

She didn’t say any more. She gave her a business card and left the rooftop house.

“A stage...?”

Lee ChaHee absentmindedly looked at Min HanNa as well as the business card.

Three days went past after Kim JaeHoon and KangYoon had met. However, he still hadn’t decided his mind.

‘Do I need to sign a contract with that place?’

He couldn’t easily judge the guy called Lee KangYoon. When he asked Oh JiWan, he said that KangYoon was someone who had great skills and was trusted greatly by his singers while he was at MG Entertainment. Moreover, none of the employees there hated him....

He rolled around on his bed, the only furniture in his small house, when his phone started vibrating. The phone number was someone unknown.

‘Dammit....’

Kim JaeHoon put the phone away in annoyance. This number was obviously from the debt collectors. He now knew that they switched between several phones to call him. Living in debt allowed him to realize some of these things.

The phone vibrated for around a minute before turning off. This process would repeat again in the afternoon. He was stressed out every time he even heard his phone vibrating.

‘...World Entertainment, huh.’

Kim JaeHoon thought back to KangYoon. Whether it was Producer Oh JiWan or other people, there were a lot of people that knew about him. All of them complimented and praised his skills. With more than three people saying the same thing, they shouldn’t be just complimenting him out of duty.

“...Let’s talk with him once again.”

Kim JaeHoon left his semi-basement room and headed to World Entertainment. When he arrived, he was met with KangYoon who was just about to leave.

“Mr. JaeHoon. Welcome.”

“So you were on your way out.”

“I was, but it looks like I gotta delay that for a bit.”

KangYoon took off his coat and returned to his office. Kim JaeHoon followed suit. Seeing KangYoon's consideration for him, Kim JaeHoon felt good.

While Jung HyeJin brewed coffee, KangYoon took his time to call someone. Then he ended the call after saying that the schedule needed to be delayed a little. Lifting the cup of coffee in front of him, KangYoon started speaking.

"Have you rested well?"

"Yes. Thanks to you...."

"That's good. Have you thought about my offer, then?"

Kim JaeHoon shook his head. KangYoon smiled lightly and put down the coffee.

"So, it comes to this. Okay, then let us see at a later-"

"It's not that. Can I ask a few questions?"

"Go ahead."

"You should know that I'm in a difficult situation. Is that really okay with you?"

"Of course, that is not a problem at all."

Seeing KangYoon reply so naturally, Kim JaeHoon felt weird instead for being so worried. He didn't know just how this man in front of him could stay calm in this situation. He decided to probe him a little more.

"Please excuse me for asking this but does the company... have enough money?"

"We're in our starting phase, so we don't have that much luxury. To be honest with you, you'll have to work to death once you get your money."

"Okay. Then I want to listen to the specific plans that you have for me if and when I do enter the company."

This was the most important question. KangYoon took a deep breath before starting.

“For the first week, we’ll leave you to rest. We’ll even give you some money, so you can travel.”

“That sounds good, hahaha.”

“That’s because hell will be waiting for you after that week. For 3 months after that, you won’t get a single minute of rest.”

Kim JaeHoon’s eyes shined. He asked for more in curiosity.

“Am I going to go to events?”

“Rather than events, an album will come first. Don’t you have one that you were preparing?”

“There was one I was preparing before I went to the military. I’m not sure if it will fit the current trends....”

“For that, we can consult our exclusive composer. She has the skills, so it should be fine.”

KangYoon spoke about the details of his plan. It was a very Spartan schedule. There was almost no rest as well. As soon as the album is released, it would be events, then events, then more events. KangYoon was really planning to make Kim JaeHoon suffer in order to get his 1.5 billion won back. Kim JaeHoon was fed up after listening to so many types of events.

“Haha.... Such a detailed plan already.... Perhaps you really will get that money back if it works.”

“May is the month of events after all. Shouldn’t I take the chance while it’s still warm?”

“Hahaha.”

Kim JaeHoon laughed like he hadn’t for a long time.

1.5 billion. It wasn’t like he never earned that much before. He had earned even more money in his previous company with

events. So, he found KangYoon's words quite reliable.

A moment of silence passed. KangYoon closed his eyes and Kim JaeHoon sat back down on the sofa.

After a bit of time, Kim JaeHoon spoke heavily again.

"...Will I really be freed from all of these weights in three months?"

"I can promise."

"....."

Seeing KangYoon so confident, Kim JaeHoon came to a decision. It felt as though he now had an ally when no one came to help him after his military service. It was completely different from the times he ran events by himself. He felt that KangYoon would be able to utilize him properly.

Kim JaeHoon organized his thoughts and spoke.

"I'll sign the contract."

"Well, it will be nice working with you, Mr. Kim JaeHoon."

The two shook hands.

World Entertainment now had one more singer, a male this time, amongst their ranks.

Chapter 97. Spreading the Broken Wings (3)

KangYoon didn't drag things out.

He paid the 1.5 billion debt that Kim JaeHoon had the day they signed the contract.

It was also Kim JaeHoon's contract deposit.

Kim JaeHoon felt strange, feeling that this was too good to be true.

"...When was this ever so easy? Haha...."

"You'll have a headache doing music alone. I can't let things like these drag you down.

Kim JaeHoon was touched by KangYoon's words as they left the bank.

'1.5 billion.... 1.5 billion....'

Behind the two men was Lee HyunJi who was blankly staring into the air.

The effects of an enormous amount of money draining out just like that were immense.

Thanks to that, Lee HyunJi's gaze towards Kim JaeHoon wasn't the nicest.

KangYoon said that he would introduce Kim JaeHoon formally to the rest of the company. Then, Kim JaeHoon said that he would go change his clothes, and KangYoon allowed that. Kim JaeHoon's house was around 40 minutes away from the company.

After returning to his office, Lee HyunJi spoke worriedly to KangYoon.

"It looks like a concert venue will be hard. We'll only be able to open stable concerts with our own exclusive venue. Isn't there going to be some hindrances to the plans we had for White

Moonlight?”

“For this album, we’ll have to increase the number of concert venues we are under contract with.”

“Ah, I think we overdid things a little. We could have taken it slower....”

Lee HyunJi said in a roundabout way that KangYoon’s plans were very reckless. KangYoon replied in understanding.

“We were reckless. However, we’ll be able to leap ahead faster just as much.”

KangYoon believed in Kim JaeHoon’s skills. He believed that good songs, his skills, and good planning would more than make up for the immediate losses.

‘A person like Kim JaeHoon can leap a step further.’

His current investment would return to him in several times the amount, is what he thought.

KangYoon cleaned up his papers for a moment and headed to the studio. Inside the studio were Kim JiMin and Lee HyunAh doing guitar practice.

“Here, you raise the bar like.... Huh? O...resident.”

“...I said I’m not oreos.”

“Yes, yes president.”

“Hello?”

Lee HyunAh seemed to have come to a liking on that word as she jokingly called KangYoon. Kim JiMin politely stood up and bowed. The two were currently applying harmonics to classical guitar.

KangYoon checked their progress for a bit before speaking his business.

“We’ll have a new addition to the family today. Please go to the studio and tell everyone to gather around.”

“Oh, really? Who is it? A guy?”

“...You’ll see.”

Lee HyunAh spoke out a barrage of questions in curiosity, but KangYoon didn’t easily reply. She grumbled and stood up.

“Unni, I’ll go.”

“No, I’ll go. You need to practice.”

Lee HyunAh left the studio and headed to the practice room.

“JiMin, did you do the copy work that I told you to do last time?”

“Huh? No, not yet....”

“Let’s see it then.”

“Noo.... This is why I wanted to go.”

There was a reason she wanted to run the errand. Kim JiMin had to pay for not doing enough practice.

While Kim JiMin was punished by raising the guitar into the air, the doors of the studio opened and Lee HyunAh, as well as Kim JaeHoon, entered. Kim JaeHoon was wearing clean denim and a white shirt instead of the baggy clothes he used to wear. He even seemed to have done his hair.

“You’re here.”

“Yes. Oh, you can drop the honorifics with me. You seem to be older than me. I’ll also comfortably call you hyung.”

“You can call me that in private spaces. But in formal occasions....”

“You don’t need to worry about that.”

He nodded in understanding.

But then, Kim JiMin’s expression turned weird as she was being punished.

‘It’s Kim JaeHoon!’

There was no way she wouldn't know about him. Although he was a wannabe singer for all men, there were many female fans as well. To see someone so famous...

“Hm? A trainee?”

“Yeah. Her name is Kim JiMin. JiMin, you can stop now.”

Kim JiMin was properly embarrassed today. She couldn't raise her head due to the embarrassment. This was their first encounter, and she was being punished.

“Hahaha, hello. I'm Kim JaeHoon.”

“H.... hello? I'm K... Kim JiMin.”

Kim JaeHoon shook hands with the trembling Kim JiMin. Her hands were shaking a lot. After that, Kim JaeHoon formally greeted Jung HyeJin from the office as well as Lee HyunJi. Not everyone knew that Kim JaeHoon would sign a contract with World Entertainment, as such their reactions were quite big.

‘Director, what happened?’

‘Well.... We'll see even more amazing things in the future. Should I give you some relaxation pills?’

‘Ahaha....’

Lee HyunJi half-jokingly said that to Jung HyeJin's question.

“The band kids aren't here yet.”

“HyunAh went to get them so they should be here soon.”

Replied KangYoon to Lee HyunJi's question. They waited for the band and started a conversation to get closer.

“...You too?”

Lee Chahee couldn't close her mouth at Kim JinDae's words. She had long since put down the bass.

“Yerang, those guys are so shameless. What the hell are they thinking? It was just a while ago when they only wanted HyunAh. So? What did you say to them?”

“What do you mean, what I said to them? I just said I’ll think about it.”

“Why would you need to think about anything?”

Lee ChaHee scolded Kim JinDae. Then, he asked back.

“Then what did you say?”

“Me?... Of course, I said to them to get lost. Are you crazy? Where else would we go other than here?”

That was a lie.

“R.... right?”

“Reject them outright. That’s the natural... thing to do.”

However, even though she said that Lee ChaHee was shaken as well. She just couldn’t be honest with herself. She also wanted to shine on the stage, even just for a moment.

Not seemingly noticing how she felt, Kim JinDae replied awkwardly again. Unlike usual, the two didn’t say much. An awkward silence took place.

At that moment, the door opened, and Lee HyunAh and Jung ChanGyu came in.

“Hey, we’re to gather up in the studio.”

Kim JinDae asked at Lee HyunAh’s words.

“The studio? Why?”

“We apparently have a new singer.”

Kim JinDae and Lee ChaHee stood up after looking at each other awkwardly.

The members of the band all headed to the studio. When they

went in, everyone was waiting for them.

“Welcome.”

KangYoon greeted them first. The members of the band greeted back and sat down in one corner. But then, they saw a rather familiar person sitting opposite to them. Kim JinDae observed him for quite a while before shouting out with widened eyes.

“Ki.... Kim JaeHoon?”

Hearing his words, Lee HyunAh and the rest of the band were all surprised. The new singer seemed to be Kim JaeHoon. Never did they imagine that they would see such a famous singer here.

“...Haha. JaeHoon looks like you scared them. We’re all here now, so why don’t we introduce ourselves first?”

KangYoon dropped the honorifics with him immediately. Kim JaeHoon laughed lightly and stood up to introduce himself formally.

“Hello, everyone? I’m Kim JaeHoon. I’m 31 years old this year, and I’m truly happy to sign a contract with World Entertainment. I hope I get along with everyone. Please take care of me.”

“Waaaah—!”

Kim JiMin applauded the loudest. The male members of the band were loud as well. Kim JaeHoon seemed to feel awkward after receiving such a grand welcome and sat down quietly.

The next was KangYoon.

“I feel like we, World Entertainment, has finally taken form. A band, a solo singer, a trainee, and a composer, as well as the managing staff. My wish is that everyone can get along like one family.”

KangYoon spoke about a lot of things. Most them were about the directions he would take the company towards. He also said that it would be for the best if everyone contributed to growing this yet-

small company and mentioned about how he'll never monopolize the fruits of their hard work.

The reactions were varied. Kim JiMin and Lee HyunAh, who already received a lot from KangYoon, understood everything, and Kim JaeHoon also nodded in understanding. However, the 3 members of the band gave lukewarm reactions. They seemed to be feeling shy.

“...We have a get-together today. Should we go eat some meat?”

“Yay!”

Though, everyone cheered at the end.

After the round of introduction, KangYoon grabbed the 3 members of the band for a bit. They became nervous as they approached KangYoon.

“Is there something wrong?”

When Lee ChaHee asked that, KangYoon told them to sit down. When everyone sat, KangYoon started speaking.

“It's been a while since you've joined. How do you feel? Is it doable?”

“...Just so-so.”

Lee ChaHee spoke strangely. Kim JinDae and Jung ChanGyu agreed to her. Although the words were vague, KangYoon understood at a glance.

‘They're shaken.’

The center of attention in a band was the vocals. And today, they accepted a popular singer.

It was no wonder that these people felt slightly worried. KangYoon wordlessly took out the papers he had on hand.

“What's this? Lee YoungHak, Kang SunYeol.....”

Kim JinDae asked and KangYoon replied immediately.

“It’s the lessons that you were told last time.”

“Lessons? Oh, personal activities?”

They understood right away. Personal activities from the 3 members of the band, in other words, income.

“But.... There’s a bit too much.”

Lee ChaHee said after looking at the long list of people and KangYoon awkwardly spoke.

“Miss Jung HyeJin had a hard time looking for all of those people. They’re all people that you’ll teach lessons to. You’re currently in a band, and you have degrees as well, don’t you? We had a hard time getting so many people.”

“Oh....”

“You can’t play around now. Go work.”

Hearing KangYoon’s joking tone, everyone burst out laughing. But KangYoon’s words didn’t end there.

“I had a look at your songs, but there weren’t that many that accented the instruments. I want to ask you about putting in an instrumental solo phrase in some of them. The songs are good, but that was a bit of a pity.”

“.....”

Hearing KangYoon’s words, they felt that he was very considerate of them. From money to the band, and even activities. They were worried that the introduction of a big singer may affect his attitude towards them, but the truth was nothing like that.

“And your answer?”

“Ah, yes, yes! We’ll do that!”

Jung ChanGyu represented everyone and answered loudly. KangYoon laughed.

“At least your answer is good. Do you need anything else?”

“No.”

“Good. You know what our aim is, right?”

When everyone fell silent, KangYoon shook his head and spoke.

“10,000 people. Didn’t we say that we’re going to do a concert with 10,000 people?”

“What?”

“Huh? Didn’t HyunAh mention that to you?”

Seeing the 3 band members at a loss, KangYoon smiled sheepishly.

“She forgot to mention about the most important thing. Sheesh, her forgetfulness must be on a different level. Anyway, our aim is a concert with 10,000 people. We’ll take steps towards that aim, so do your best, okay?”

KangYoon told them to tell him if they needed anything and sent them out.

When Jung ChanGyu went up first saying that he had to go to the bathroom, Kim JinDae spoke.

“...Hey.”

“What?”

“I think this place is the best.”

“...Such a simple guy.”

Muttering that he was such a simple guy, Lee ChaHee punched Kim JinDae. Kim JinDae screamed in pain, but there was no holding back.

(T/N: the [] speech seemed to be spoken in English.) [HeeYoon! Are you busy today too?]

HeeYoon, who was about to leave after the lecture, was held back by a Caucasian girl.

[Hm? Yeah, sorry. I have work to do.]

[Why do you keep leaving so early? Are you that busy?]

The Caucasian girl left the lecture hall with HeeYoon. She had a tall stature with a thin waist and an ample figure. When she walked past, all males would give her a glance.

She didn't seem to care, and never left HeeYoon's side.

[Today's lecture was so boring. Why would he want us to write an essay on the Jackson family?]

[Don't say that. You'll only hate it more.]

[You, one happy girlie. So cute.]

The two walked to the gates of the university together. After saying that she should come to a party sometime, the Caucasian girl left HeeYoon.

While HeeYoon was walking home, her phone starting ringing. When she saw it, it was from her brother.

“Yes, oppa.”

– You should have finished school, now?”

“That was fast. Yeah. I'm just heading home.”

After talking about recent matters, KangYoon started talking about his topic.

– Is there a song that a guy could sing?

“A guy? What's the genre? Ballad? Rock?”

– Ballad. You know about Kim JaeHoon, right?

“Kim JaeHoon, of course, I do. I love his songs. I especially like his song ‘I love’. Why?”

KangYoon told her that Kim JaeHoon just joined World

Entertainment.

“Hiiik? Really!? So, uh.... You want a song for him?”

– Is there a good one?

“W... wait. Haha.... This makes me nervous. Can you wait for one week? I’ll clean it up and send it to you.”

Due to the sudden introduction of a large singer to the company, HeeYoon screamed in joy. She felt very excited to give a song to such a person.

After the call, she gripped her two fists.

“Good!”

Her steps home became faster.

Although Lee ChaHee drank a lot of alcohol, she didn’t feel like drinking today. She refused to go to a 2nd round amongst the singers and headed straight home. (T/N: remember they had a get-together?) Lee ChaHee climbed the hill as always and arrived at her rooftop house. However, someone was waiting for her there again.

“You were that....”

“Hello.”

Yerang Entertainment’s scouter, Min HanNa. She greeted politely and smiled.

“I wish to hear the answer to last time.”

Lee ChaHee felt confused. Yes, the goodwill that KangYoon showed them today was very surprising. However, that just didn’t feel real just yet. So, she asked.

“You said you’ll give me a proper stage.... Right?”

“Of course.”

She spoke as though that was natural and continued to speak.

“Once you come to us, Yerang, you’ll work for us as our exclusive bassist. All concerts with the name Yerang entertainment will have you standing on the stage.”

“What if there aren’t any concerts?”

“In times without concerts, you just need to do what you are doing ordinarily. Teaching lessons and doing club performances is fine too. What we want from you is only to play in concerts under the name of Yerang Entertainment.”

It was obvious that Yerang Entertainment would hold large-scale concerts. Standing in a place like that? She felt tempted for a moment.

‘...The president was considerate for us whether it was the lessons or our solo parts. He tried to treat us fairly.’

However, the words that KangYoon spoke to her in the afternoon kept nagging her mind. Lee ChaHee kept asking.

“Concert.... Are there any other things?”

“There are many if you mean proper stages. Under the name of Yerang, that is.”

There were many types of stages. There would be just as many opportunities. Play with us on a bigger field. That was what she meant, summed up.

Yerang’s stages should definitely be big and charming. How good would it be if she could play there? Yerang held large-scale concerts frequently. A bassist on such a place? It was charming.

‘Ten thousand people, ten thousand.....’

But KangYoon’s words kept nagging her mind. Of course, Yerang’s was a bigger company. However, she couldn’t forget his words. It may be that KangYoon was all talk, but he even managed to accept a famous singer, Kim JaeHoon. She didn’t think that he

was the type of person to do that.

After thinking about it for a while, she eventually shook her head.

“I’m sorry. I don’t think I can leave the team.”

“Is there anything else you need?”

“No, I just don’t feel like it. Then....”

When she set her mind, Lee ChaHee didn’t even look back and shut her door. Min HanNa, who felt that everything was going to go well, fell on confusion after everything went wrong.

“Miss ChaHee! Miss ChaHee!”

She kept calling out, but there was no reply.

“Oh, sh!t.... I’m so dead.”

Min HanNa’s steps were heavy as she turned back.

Chapter 98. Spreading the Broken Wings (4)

[Kim JaeHoon switches companies – Exclusive Contract with World Entertainment]

– Sports Massei: Oh Yeon Cham

(Sports Massei – Journalist Oh Yeon Cham) The singer Kim JaeHoon (age 31) has entered an exclusive 5-year contract with World Entertainment.

On the 10th, a person from World Entertainment has revealed that Kim JaeHoon has entered a 5-year exclusive contract with World Entertainment. With this, Kim JaeHoon will be a singer belonging to World Entertainment until 2016.

World Entertainment has also said that there will be no more sufferings for him after the conflict with his previous company.

Kim JaeHoon has stated that....

.

.

“...Huh.”

President Kang ShiMyoung made an expression of loss while looking at the news article.

“He accepted Kim JaeHoon? I really don’t get this guy.”

It was practically a public secret that Kim JaeHoon was looking for a management group. He knew about the 1.5billion won (1.5m USD) contract deposit as well. However, considering his age, and the money necessary to recruit him, he wondered if Kim JaeHoon was really worth the investment.

“Is he trying to go for a short term? Then there’s no way he would sign a 5-year contract.... Hmm. I don’t get the reason....”

He was curious. There were many instabilities about accepting

Kim JaeHoon. His 4-year gap as well as his conflict with his previous company. He really had nothing other than his singing. As such, when he approached him, he thought about it for one day and decided to decline. He thought that the other companies would do the same.

While President Kang ShiMyoung was wondering about this, a notification that the secretary has come with a report had come. Soon, a woman entered. It was Min HanNa.

“What of it?”

“The thing is....”

Min HanNa carefully said that the scout for Lee ChaHee had failed. Then, President Kang ShiMyoung smiled and shook his head.

“It must not have been easy. If they had any smarts at all, they should have realized that they would be useless the moment they come here. Anyway, thanks for your hard work.”

“I apologize, sir.”

Min HanNa’s expression brightened seeing that the President didn’t say much. However, his scolding came after.

“But even so, it’s a bit of a pity. I thought that Chief Min would do better. And this ended up making them have a tighter bond. Now then, how am I supposed to leave you with any further work?”

“.....”

Min HanNa had to receive Kang ShiMyoung’s nagging for quite a while after that.

“...Please excuse me.”

When Min HanNa left with a dejected expression, President Kang ShiMyoung lightly frowned as well.

“They’re all so useless. I wish I could have just one person like

Lee KangYoon.”

He grumbled while looking towards the door.

Kim JaeHoon went on a trip. It was KangYoon’s method to console his tired body and heart. He went on a country tour saying that he wanted to travel across the country.

While Kim JaeHoon was absent, KangYoon proceeded with matters related to him. He received a song from HeeYoon and started to schedule Kim JaeHoon’s events. Although he was supposed to hire a manager and let that person manage Kim JaeHoon, he planned to manage him himself for a while.

2 a.m.

KangYoon was having a call with HeeYoon at home.

“I think the key is too high.”

– Really? I tried high since you said that his voice changed a little. Well, it’s Kim JaeHoon after all.

KangYoon expressed his questions about the songs that HeeYoon had sent. KangYoon’s eyes were seeing white light from the notes inside the room. However, he also considered Kim JaeHoon’s vocal tone and his pitch. He thought that it would be better if it was lower.

HeeYoon said that she would call back an hour later. She intended to lower the key and finish the final edits and send it back to him. KangYoon also now had a grasp and thought about how to rearrange the song.

While HeeYoon was thinking about the song, HeeYoon called back.

– Oppa, I sent you the file.

KangYoon opened the file and played it. It was a key lower than the previous one. After listening to the end, KangYoon was

satisfied.

“I think this is okay.”

– Sheesh, you’re so picky. You rejected it 5 times.

“It’s work, I can’t help it.”

– Yeah, yeah, you’re the boss.

HeeYoon grumbled as though the work was hard for her. KangYoon only laughed.

– Then do your best at work, oppa. I’ll leave the rest to you.

“Yes. I’ll ask you for things later then.”

After the call, KangYoon rolled up his sleeves.

“Well then, should I start?”

KangYoon focused on work after a shout.

Although he stayed up the night, the arrangement wasn’t done so easily.

In the end, he slept at 5 and woke back up at 7. KangYoon washed his tired face and went to work.

“Hello.”

When he arrived at his office, Jung HyeJin greeted him. She gave him coffee as she always did.

“Thank you, Miss HyeJin. Are you trying to schedule for JaeHoon?”

“Yes. As you have said, I’ve applied for KTS. There was a reply saying that the director of that programme will contact us in the afternoon.”

“Thank you for your work.”

Jung HyeJin went back to her seat and started working. Lee HyunJi came to work soon as well. She greeted Jung HyeJin and came to KangYoon’s seat.

“Late night music Hula? Is he going on TV without a comeback album?”

Lee HyunJi judged that a TV programme was too early. KangYoon calmly explained to her.

“Kim JaeHoon has a 4-year gap. Although it would be fine to act after an album, he should be very passionate about singing right about now. In my opinion, the right time should be when he comes back after getting himself together.”

“But I still think it should be better to prepare an album first....”

“Naturally, there will be an album. However, what we’re doing this time is for the events.”

“The events?”

“1.5 billion won. We need to get that back. It’s not like we produce money out of nothing.”

“What, you really intend to? Then the TV programme is just for advertising? Ha....”

Lee HyunJi understood what KangYoon was thinking. KangYoon wanted to tell the world that Kim JaeHoon was still as mighty as ever despite his 4-year gap. He was once a peak-level singer. However, it would be natural for there to be fans that were doubtful because of his 4-year gap, and fans that still waited for him. Although a new album may receive various criticisms, using his previous songs would lower that risk.

Lee HyunJi thought about it for a moment before raising her voice in excitement.

“Hula is shot in a studio and not an ordinary stage. Then we’ll be able to produce a better voice.... Oh, and isn’t there a band in Hula?”

“I was planning to send White Moonlight as the session even if you didn’t tell me.”

“A duet with Lee HyunAh? Looks like HyunAh will rise.”

Hearing those words, KangYoon shook his head.

“Not yet. Only the band will appear.”

“Then only the band will debut on public TV? So, something like this can happen. Looks like you’ll receive a beating from HyunAh for a while, President.”

“It’s work, I can’t help it. I was already worried that the band kids may think that HyunAh is receiving special treatment. This is the perfect time to show them that she is not.”

Lee HyunJi wholeheartedly agreed to KangYoon’s plans. This was a chance to grab many opportunities. She even went a step further and asked if she could meet some of the people at the TV companies. She showed the confidence that she could get better screen times since it was a late-night show.

“Okay, then. I’ll leave that to you, director.”

“I shall answer your expectations, then.”

Lee HyunJi went back to her seat with a smile.

In the afternoon, Lee HyunJi went to KTS after being contacted by the director of that programme, and KangYoon headed to the underground studio. Inside, Kim JiMin was exercising her voice. After seeing KangYoon, she greeted him and went back to practice.

“So, you’re quite proficient with basic vocalization.”

“Yes, but it’s so different from the other vocalization methods. It’s easy at first, but there are more things to look out for the more I do it.”

Kim JiMin expressed her difficulties. She said that she wanted to sing as well, but KangYoon shook his head.

“It’s not time yet. The professor will tell you when you’re ready. You can’t practice songs or like that on your own, okay?”

“Yes. It’s because of bad habits, isn’t it?”

“You’re right. It will be hard to fix if you get any bad habits. Also....”

KangYoon checked Kim JiMin’s current level. Her voice, her guitar, her music theory, etc. She asked at that time.

“Uh.... Am I not going to learn to dance?”

“Dance? Why? You want to learn?”

“No, but the thing is.... The trainees around my age are all learning it, but I’m not.”

KangYoon patted Kim JiMin and spoke.

“You might need to dance later, but right now, I don’t think you should do it. You should be focusing on one thing right now.”

“Then... I will have to do it?”

“Why? You don’t like dancing?”

“.....”

It was a silent reply. KangYoon ended up laughing.

“Well, you are terrible at dancing after all. You might be worried about dancing, but right now, focus on becoming the best at what you are doing currently first and then focus on other things later.”

“Okay.”

By the time KangYoon finished his talk with Kim JiMin, professor Choi ChanYang opened the doors to the studio and entered. KangYoon asked him about Kim JiMin.

“Her innate voice is good, but she also practiced a lot. If she focuses, no one around her age will be able to catch up to her in around half a year.”

KangYoon was very surprised. Although professor Choi ChanYang looked very soft on the outside, he was very harsh when it came to evaluation. If he was saying this, then Kim JiMin’s

progress was indeed fast.

‘Maybe we don’t even need a whole year.’

Since it generally took a lot of money to raise trainees, these achievements were a joyful thing for him.

After that, KangYoon went upstairs to the practice room and observed their daily practice and ended his work for that day.

Kim JaeHoon had returned after his holiday. He had a very bright expression as though he had been relieved of all the weight that was pressuring him.

“I’m back.”

“Welcome.”

He and KangYoon had a light hug in the office.

The two sat down and started talking about business.

“Late night Hula? That’s good. I’ve always wanted to go there once.”

When he heard about his first schedule from KangYoon, his expression brightened. He was worried that he may have had to do some entertainment shows or talk shows, but it looked as though he was worried about nothing.

“You’ll go there with our band.”

“Really? That’s good. We can practice beforehand. Am I going to do a duet with that girl as well?”

“No, we need to get the focus to shine on you, so only the band will be appearing. If HyunAh goes there, the attention will be divided among you two.”

“That’s a pity. I’ve always wanted to do a duet with a girl.”

“Let’s try that out at a later date on another programme.”

KangYoon talked about many things. He talked about any precautions he should have or the things he should do on the show. Kim JaeHoon nodded his head at his words.

“Okay. I thought my first TV show would’ve been an entertainment one....”

“You won’t get any of those in the future either. I know that you’ll get video edited out. Why should I send you?”

“Hahahaha.”

Kim JaeHoon laughed awkwardly.

KangYoon and Kim JaeHoon headed to the practice studio where White Moonlight was practicing. When the two entered, the loud music all stopped at once.

Although they had seen each other before, Kim JaeHoon and White Moonlight were still awkward with each other. KangYoon first made them stand next to each other. Since they would be appearing on TV together, they were practically one family. Fortunately, Kim JinDae and Jung ChanGyu looked at Kim JaeHoon with admiration, while Lee ChaHee also didn’t show any signs of discomfort.

Just that, Lee HyunAh was pouting after hearing that she wouldn’t be appearing with them.

“Then... should we start practicing?”

When Kim JaeHoon grabbed the mic, the band picked up their instruments again. The score was already there. The band started, and Kim JaeHoon closed his eyes.

“The sad feelings – blown in the wind–”

Kim JaeHoon’s low, yet thin voice started flowing out in the practice studio. His notes and the notes from the instruments combined to make a very intense white light. However....

“Wait. The lows are too high. Please lower it a little. Raise the

high a bit too.”

Kim JaeHoon didn't seem to like the voice and stopped the music to set the mic again. Manager Kim DaeHyun interacted with the mixer and changed the setting. Then, the song started again.

“The sad feelings – blown in the wind–”

The white became stronger. However, Kim JaeHoon halted the song again.

“Sorry for that. Is there an echo?”

“Yes.”

“Just remove all of it. Remove the delay as well and lower the gain.”

Kim JaeHoon asked for a lot of things. Kim DaeHyun had a hard time listening to all his requests.

‘He’s so harsh....’

Kim DaeHyun felt as though he was in a real concert. Kim JaeHoon reacted sensitively to even the most minute settings. He looked at KangYoon, but KangYoon didn't flinch at all. He intended for him to do it himself.

‘Dammit.’

Like that, a total of 40 minutes passed.

“Hm.... The microphone doesn't fit my voice. But since this is practice....”

Kim JaeHoon sighed in pity. Then, KangYoon spoke from behind.

“What did you use?”

“It was from SNR, and it felt good since it was heavy.”

“Looks like we'll need to get you a personal mic too.”

“They probably don't sell those in Korea.”

“I’ll get one for you regardless.”

Hearing KangYoon’s words, Kim JaeHoon felt better. Although he didn’t have complete confidence yet, he felt that he should be able to do well with a President like this.

“Should we do it then?”

When Kim JaeHoon gave the signal, Kim JinDae gave the beat on the drums, much more nervous than usual.

Leaving behind the band members to practice, Lee HyunAh left the practice studio.

‘It feels quite strange.’

Everyone else was practicing other than her. She felt left out. Even though it was practically thanks to her that they were able to come to this place-

“HyunAh”

When she was about to fall into thought, someone called her from behind. It was KangYoon.

“Ah, yes. President.”

“Should we go out for a little?”

“Where... are we going?”

Normally, she would jump around in joy, but she felt down right now. KangYoon replied calmly to her question.

“To see a concert venue.”

“What?”

“Get ready and come back out. I’ll wait at the entrance.”

KangYoon spoke a word and returned to his office.

‘Yes!’

Her downcast feelings instantly rose sky high thanks to the

sudden invitation for a date(?).

Chapter 99. Spreading the Broken Wings (5)

“HyunAh, where are you going?”

Asked Lee ChaHee, but Lee HyunAh left with a vague answer.

She rushed to the entrance of the office in fear of being late.

KangYoon was waiting for her at the entrance.

“Let’s go.”

Lee HyunAh suppressed her jubilation and stood next to him.

“Where are we going?”

“Wait a moment. There’s one more person.”

“What?”

As soon as he finished his words, a car stopped near them and the windows went down. It was Lee HyunJi’s luxury sports car. She spoke from within the car.

“Huh? You’re going too, HyunAh?”

“.....”

Lee HyunAh looked at KangYoon with a strange expression. However, that only lasted a moment. Thinking back, it was her fault that she assumed that the two would go alone. KangYoon didn’t seem to know what she was thinking and opened the door to the front passenger seat and got onboard. Lee HyunAh got onboard the back seat.

The three departed to Hongdae like that.

Inside the car, KangYoon and Lee HyunJi spoke about many work-related matters. These included their future plans, fund management, as well as employment of other staff.

‘Wh.... What the heck? Why am I here?’

Why was it that she felt fluttered just before? Lee HyunAh

momentarily felt that she was a fool. It only took an instant for her excitement to fall to the bottom.

“...Our current budget....”

“With the pay we get this week....”

Lee HyunAh wanted to participate in that conversation, but there was no way to. Their talk regarding money was something completely clueless to her. She only felt that the scale of the money was big, but nothing felt realistic to her. Of course, she knew some things about copyrights fee, but building usage fees, other singers, as well as other administrative matters were like an alien language to her.

‘...I shouldn’t have come.’

While Lee HyunAh looked out the window with a frown, the car stopped. It was a shared parking lot in Hongdae.

“The parking fees are expensive here....”

When Lee HyunAh said that in a worried tone, KangYoon received a ticket from the parking lot’s agent and shook his head.

“Spending money here is much better than looking for an empty space on an alleyway to park.

Time was money. Agreeing with his opinion, Lee HyunAh followed behind him.

The three-headed to a nearby concert venue, Sweetpins. When they entered, a female staff in clean clothing greeted them.

KangYoon said that he had made an appointment and the female staff called the office to confirm. Soon, a man came out from the office and greeted them.

“Are you Mr. Lee KangYoon? Welcome.”

“Hello.”

After a light greeting, the male staff leads KangYoon and

company to the office. They drank the coffee that the concert venue gave them and looked through the guide leaflets, the prices, and the materials about other concert teams.

Looking at those materials, Lee HyunJi asked the staff.

“How many people can it hold?”

“Up to 200. If we go with standing seats, we can go with twice that much.”

“So around 300....”

Lee HyunJi judged that the staff was exaggerating and drew her own conclusions. The staff became awkward and turned his gaze around to KangYoon.

“We have done a remodeling recently and have replaced all the sound and light equipment to the latest ones.”

“How high is the ceiling?”

When KangYoon asked an unexpected question, the staff couldn't reply easily. When KangYoon saw the papers, the height was there. He turned his gaze around to the papers.

“...Not that low. Looks like there's no need to worry about the sound.”

“.....”

“According to these, you seem to be using the Allen series of speakers. Those are quite strong in the highs, so I'm worried that there may be unwanted noise. Is there sound dampening on the ceiling?”

The staff sweated hard. These people were very picky. As an office worker, how was he supposed to know the special traits of speakers? It wasn't easy to answer those questions. The staff members back became damp with sweat. He still tried to answer to the best of his abilities using the papers.

Fortunately, KangYoon's questions weren't limitless.

“...Thank you for the coffee. I wish to see the venue now.”

“Th... this way please.”

After KangYoon’s barrage of questions, the staff immediately led them to the concert hall. The hall was right in front of the 1st floor lobby. When the staff opened the door, there was a wide stage as well as a large clearing.

“The booth seems to be in a suitable place....”

KangYoon looked around and took pictures with his phone. Lee HyunJi also looked around in her own way.

“HyunAh.”

“Yes?”

She, who was suddenly called out after all this time, was surprised by KangYoon’s call.

“Go stand on the stage.”

At KangYoon’s request, she headed to the center of the stage. KangYoon stood in the middle of the audience area and looked at the stage; then asked the staff.

“Can we test the lighting and the speakers right now?”

“Please wait a moment. The engineers are on leave today....”

The staff showed an awkward expression. The engineers usually only came to work on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, where there were shows. This was done to save on human resources cost.

“Just open the door. I know my way around.”

“If you say so....”

The staff didn’t dare to refuse a request from a potential customer. He brought KangYoon a set of keys from the office and opened the booth.

“HyunAh, stay still.”

“Yes.”

Lee HyunAh nodded her head.

KangYoon started fiddling with the lights in the booth. He controlled the lights with the light mixer and soon grasped how it was done. The staff watched KangYoon from behind.

“Can you switch the lights?”

“If you contact us prior to the show, then yes.”

“Good. The lights here have too much blue tone. HyunAh doesn’t do well with blue lights....”

KangYoon fiddled with the lights for a few minutes before turning them all off. Then, he left the booth and turned on the spotlight. With one strong light shining down upon her, Lee HyunAh asked KangYoon in embarrassment.

“So, do I keep standing here?”

“Yeah. You’re going to be performing here in the future so have a look around too.”

Lee HyunAh felt as though she had become a puppet. Before, with Greenlight, there was no prior testing due to time problems.... And this felt strange.

KangYoon went back to the booth again. He turned on all the lights and had a look.

‘Is he some kinda engineer?’

From what the staff knew, KangYoon was supposed to be the president of a company, but he felt more like an engineer instead. The way he controlled the lights with the light mixer was just like an expert. He would even believe it if KangYoon said he was an employee here. He had met various presidents until now, but someone like KangYoon was a first.

KangYoon controlled the lights for a while before turning off the light mixer.

“You said that we can change the light settings, right?”

“Yes, of course.”

Asking the same thing made KangYoon quite the annoying customer, but the staff member was a professional. He never lost his smile, However....

“Can we test the acoustics as well?”

When KangYoon said that he wanted to test the sound mixer as well, the staff’s eyebrows twitched. These people were very picky.

‘Ha.....’

At this point, the staff became absent-minded. However, it wasn’t like the customers were in the wrong or something. He permitted them with a slightly trembling voice.

“Yes. O... of course.”

Normally, getting to know the stage was a very reasonable thing to do. However, other people usually looked for things like the location of the venue, the makers of the equipment, and other superficial things like that, but this person was completely different. He even went on to do some testing himself. This was the most frightening of customers out there. The staff clasped his hands in nervousness.

KangYoon told the staff that he wanted to borrow a mic. At this point, the staff had half-given up. KangYoon gave the mic to Lee HyunAh and HyunAh connected to the mic input.

“Ah, ah — mic test. Ah, ah—”

Listening to Lee HyunAh’s voice over the speakers, KangYoon checked the overall acoustics. It would be good if he had a music recording with him, but he didn’t have one on hand.

“HyunAh, can you sing a song for me?”

“A song?”

“Yeah, it’s for testing.”

HyunAh seemed to be happy that she finally had something to do before she warmed up her voice and raised her voice.

“All day – my heart – is on top of that clock -”

HyunAh’s voice filled the hall. Observing the weak white light from the green note, KangYoon checked for the sound. This was the base test without any effects added to HyunAh’s voice.

‘It’s not really a satisfying sound. It feels murky.’

That was KangYoon’s conclusion after considering the musical note, the light, and the sound he heard through his ears.

“Should I do more?”

“No, it’s fine.”

KangYoon thanked the employee before turning off the power switch and leaving the booth.

“Thank you. Can you give me a business card?”

At KangYoon’s question, the staff gave him a business card. He was already sweating on his forehead.

“Then I shall contact you later.”

“Please have a safe trip back.”

After a handshake, KangYoon left the Sweetpins concert hall.

Heading to the car, KangYoon asked Lee HyunAh.

“How was the hall?”

“Hm....”

Lee HyunAh thought about it for a moment before replying.

“Honestly speaking, it didn’t feel that good. The sound was murky, and the lights weren’t too my style either.”

“Really?”

“But if pre...ppa wants me to do it, then I’ll do it.” (T/N: President + oppa, now in reverse) “...Mind how you address me.”

“Sorry.”

“Anyway, so this place is no good. Let’s look at a few others.”

Lee HyunAh seemed embarrassed about what KangYoon said and scratched her cheeks while looking away.

After that, the trio looked around a few more concert venues. The employees there all had a hard time due to KangYoon’s testing.

Late night music show, Hula.

This was a music TV programme done by Moon Shinhak who was an entertainer, musician, as well as an actor, and this programme was a music-specific programme that was broadcasted just after midnight. The motif of this program was to let famous singers sing to their heart’s content as long as it was within the studio inside the TV station.

Today, Kim JaeHoon was recording that programme.

“You didn’t forget anything?”

“Yes!”

The parking lot in front of the front gates.

KangYoon asked the band who were loading their instruments into the van. This was their first time appearing on TV, so they all looked nervous.

“I also want to go, but I have a lot of work to do. Damn...”

Lee HyunJi showed her disappointment. It was such a pity for her that work was dragging her feet.

“But it’s because of you, director, that I can leave the company without worries.”

“Thank me more.”

“T.h.a.n.k.y.o.u.”

KangYoon replied in a prankful tone to Lee HyunJi’s grumbles.

Lee HyunJi turned around to Kim JiMin behind KangYoon.

“JiMin, you can’t go touching things just because they all look curious to you, okay? You can’t step on the lines either.”

“Yes.”

“Pfft, the lines are fine. Though, she might be electrocuted.”

“Oh....”

“Hahaha, it’s a joke.”

Kim JiMin shrank back at Lee HyunJi and KangYoon’s pranks. Thanks to that, their mood as they went to the TV station was very bright.

With the exception of Lee HyunJi, Jung HyeJin, and Lee HyunAh, who remained at the company to practice, everyone else was going to the TV station. This was an outing with a lot of members since the founding of the company.

Inside the car, Kim JaeHoon clasped his hands and closed his eyes. This was his first appearance on TV after a very long time. His heart pounded with nervousness.

Behind him, Lee ChaHee and Kim JinDae were fighting, while Jung ChanGyu and Kim JiMin were talking about serious things.

‘Looks like they are getting along.’

KangYoon looked to the back seat through the rearview mirror. Seeing everyone get along, he felt joyous.

When they arrived, the assistant director came out to meet them.

“Hello, I’ve been waiting for you.”

With KangYoon at the front, everyone followed the assistant

director. The studio of the recording was on the 17th floor. When they arrived at the studio, the drums, mixer, guitar amp, and many other musical necessities were mostly set up.

While KangYoon greeted Moon Shinhak, the presenter, and the producer, Kim JaeHoon, the rest of the band started to tune their instruments. The drums were tightened to produce a suitable sound, while the electric guitar was controlled through an effector. The bass guitar was also tuned to match the rest.

Kim JaeHoon installed the microphone that KangYoon had gotten him and started to tune his voice.

“Love you — love you —”

Kim JaeHoon sang lightly to tell the requirements to the sound engineer. Today, there was no ear mic. Instead, there was a monitoring speaker, and Kim JaeHoon had asked the sound engineer to add the base sounds of the bass guitar, the drums, and the synthesizer.

A lot of time had passed, and the other members had finished setting themselves up. However, Kim JaeHoon was still in the middle of setting.

“It’s just as I heard.”

Moon ShinHak narrowed his eyes. KangYoon asked from the side.

“What have you heard?”

“His perfectionism. Kim JaeHoon is known for being a perfectionist, isn’t he? Looks like the engineer fellow will suffer quite a lot today.”

Just as Moon ShinHak had said, the engineer had a hard time doing the minute settings. To the others, like the band and the producer, it didn’t sound that much different, but Kim JaeHoon kept asking the engineer to retune it in dissatisfaction. A whole 20 minutes had passed since the rest of the band had finished their

settings.

‘Oh no.’

It was very rude to keep dragging time with setting in front of a senior like Moon ShinHak. Moon ShinHak was smiling in understanding since he was a musician as well, but who knows what would happen if they dragged for any longer. KangYoon headed to the engineer’s location before things got worse.

“Excuse me, but can I have a look at it?”

The engineer let go of the mixer with a blank expression at KangYoon’s words. Perhaps he thought that KangYoon would be good since he was the president of the company that Kim JaeHoon belonged to.

“JaeHoon, let’s do this quickly.”

“Okay. Love you — love you—”

Yellow musical notes started appearing in front of KangYoon’s eyes. Soon, those notes started generating white light. KangYoon started controlling the mixer. As JaeHoon had requested, he minutely increased the bass and decreased the middles a little. Then, the light became stronger, albeit very little.

“Huh? Hyung. Put up the gain a little bit.”

Kim JaeHoon was excited as though he had finally found the sound he wanted. KangYoon adjusted the sound per his request. Then, the white light became a lot stronger.

“This is good. Okay, thank you.”

The settings were finally over. KangYoon said excuse me to the engineer and left the place.

Moon ShinHak showed interest in KangYoon.

“Are you an engineer as well, president?”

“I learned a little.”

“Haha. Your ears aren’t ordinary. Kim JaeHoon, that fellow, is known for being very picky, but you got an okay in one go. The sound is definitely better too. Looks like there will be a good stage today.”

Seeing KangYoon make an awkward reaction, Moon ShinHak told him that they should have a drink together sometime and stood up to get ready for the show.

After a band jam for the overall sound adjustment, the recording began.

“Can’t win against my loneliness – I wander through the night, drunk, looking for you–”

A quiet ballad filled the studio. The hefty, yet thin voice gradually became more powerful and made Kim JaeHoon’s own unique song.

“My hot love – is washed away by the rain –”

Contrasting to the bass that kept becoming lower, Kim JaeHoon’s voice kept going higher. Then, Kim JinDae’s drums halted for a moment before re-entering powerfully to heighten the atmosphere.

“Your promise to return – made me live on – but –”

Kim JaeHoon’s voice became gradually more powerful. KangYoon could already see a strong white light covering the entire studio. The white light seeped into everyone present and made them absorbed into the song.

However, KangYoon wasn’t as satisfied. He could see something different within the white light.

‘Is that from back then?’

It was similar to ‘that light’ that he saw from Lee HyunAh’s stage. It was silver light.

The more Kim JaeHoon's song heightened the song, the stronger the light became. However, the silver light didn't completely overwhelm the white light. It became stronger before going away and did that again. In Lee HyunAh's case, the two lights were intermixed, but this time it was different.

The song ended like that. Everyone in the studio cheered and clapped.

"Fuu, thanks for your work, everyone."

Kim JaeHoon greeted everyone while sweating. Although this wasn't a proper concert stage, he was happy to sing to his heart's content. The band members also felt very happy that they were able to go with a vocal that was not HyunAh.

"Let's rest for 30 minutes...."

"Wait."

Before the assistant director could declare rest, KangYoon stepped up.

"I apologize, but can we record this song just once more?"

"What?"

The producer did not hide his surprise. Kim JaeHoon's song was one of the best he had heard. But why? Even Kim JaeHoon looked at KangYoon with a confused expression.

However, KangYoon was thinking differently from everyone else.

'This song isn't one that will end with just this.'

While everyone looked at him in confusion, KangYoon was convinced.

He was convinced that he would be able to raise the power behind this song.

Chapter 100. Hot Spring(1)

Lanzhou, Gansu province, China.

[Ready, action.]

A woman in a tight Chinese dress blocked an opposing one clad in black. Following that, she hit her opponent with her elbow. The opponent tried to retreat from the force but had to fly in the air due to a blow from the knee and the fists.

[Cut! Good, very good.]

The director, holding the megaphone, continued onto the next scene as though he was satisfied with the action scene. But this time, the black-clad woman switched. It was an action double. However, the lady in the Chinese dress shook her hands to signal that she was okay. The director gave the sign as soon as the makeup re-do was done. The shooting began.

[Where is he?]

During a clash of fists, the woman in the Chinese dressed asked that question, but the black-clad lady did not answer. Their bodies flew up into the air before clashing again. While the two floated into the air, a giant fan caused their dresses to flutter.

[Cut! Okay, let's rest for a bit.]

It was an okay sign on the first shoot. As a difficult action scene was very good on the first try, the director also seemed to have felt good and gave everyone a break. While everyone went back to their places, the lady in the Chinese dress laid back on a long bench.

Her manager gave her a bottle of cold water as she wiped her sweat away with a towel.

“Well done, JinSeo.”

The woman in the Chinese dress – it was Min JinSeo. She drank

the whole bottle in one go and put it down.

“Thanks, JooHwan-oppa. How about HyeRin-unni and the others?”

“They’re all nearby. They’re busy touring the Jiayuguan.”

“Sheesh. Tell them to watch out for their organs.”

“Whoa, JinSeo. Where did you learn that from?”

“From you, of course.”

Manager Kim JooHwan was scared stiff at Min JinSeo’s words. Min JinSeo giggled seeing him panic.

“It’s a joke. Oppa. What about the thing I asked you about last time?”

“You asked me something?”

“.....”

When Min JinSeo’s expression turned frightening, manager Kim JooHwan immediately clapped his hands as though he remembered.

“Oh, that? I looked into it already.”

Manager Kim JooHwan tried to act calm as he replied.

“Team leader Lee is in Korea right now.”

“In.... in Korea? He came back from America?”

Min JinSeo shouted very loudly. All the Chinese staff looked towards her due to the sudden outburst of Korean, but Min JinSeo did not care at all.

“Where, where is he? Is he doing well? He’s not sick anywhere, right? Right?”

“Don’t get excited. Calm down, do things one by one.”

“...Sorry. Anyway, he’s in Korea?”

“Yeah. For now, anyway.”

Min JinSeo stood up as though there was nothing more to say. She looked as though she was about to pack her bag and go. Kim JooHwan grabbed her in panic.

“Let me go.”

“Calm down. Where do you think you’re going?”

“What do you mean where? Of course, it’s to Korea....”

“You want to ditch this place and go to Korea? Do you think that petty team leader would like it if you go to Korea right now?”

“.....”

Min JinSeo became silent. With his personality, if she told him that she ditched work to meet him, then it was obvious that he would book her a flight back immediately. KangYoon was such a person.

“Moreover, if you ditch your work here, your life as an entertainer will be over. The female protagonist left the film scene in order to meet a guy. I’m afraid of rumors. How much do you think this film costs....”

“.....”

“Actually, the company told me to never tell you about it, but I’m telling you because you’re an adult and I believe that you can take care of yourself, so let’s work, okay?”

“...Okay.”

“You’re going to Korea in half a year anyway? Our goddess, please do your best, okay?”

Min JinSeo powerlessly nodded her head at his words.

Her heart had already flown over to Korea.

Resting time.

Kim JaeHoon was resting while drinking some water to relieve

his fatigue.

‘Record it again?’

The song was definitely satisfactory. But recording it again? Kim JaeHoon approached KangYoon thinking that he might have done something wrong.

“JaeHoon what is it?”

“The recording. I’m wondering if my song was bad.”

Kim JaeHoon expressed his question. It was definitely okay to his ears. That was why he gave the okay... on top of that, he was known as a perfectionist too.

KangYoon was already aware of what he was thinking and carefully replied.

“What do you mean bad, it was very good. But there were parts that I thought were slightly off.”

“Off?”

“Yeah. This part. – I’ll get ready until then – this part. You know that the tone switches here, right?”

“Yes. Because I raise the sound quickly.”

“Why don’t we slow it down a little?”

“Slow it down?”

“Yeah. In my opinion....”

KangYoon spoke the things he felt while observing the notes. Kim JaeHoon was suspicious at first but eventually looked as though he understood.

“Okay. Perhaps it’s because I keep getting into the habit of thinking about the MR. I thought I matched it pretty well.”

“You’re not doing it wrong. I think it’s just a matter of feeling. You know, something minute.”

Kim JaeHoon was very sensitive. KangYoon indirectly spoke of his opinions in order to not make Kim JaeHoon react sensitively, and Kim JaeHoon listened to him well.

After the rest, the recording began again. Kim JaeHoon's singing rang out through the studio again with the piano accompaniment.

“The meaning behind the tears on my eyes – I consoled myself that it was rain –”

Kim JaeHoon's voice rode on the faint piano accompaniment and emphasized the bass. The drums calmly generated the rhythm. All the notes produced white light and filled the studio.

“Can't win against my loneliness – I wander through the night, drunk, looking for you–”

Kim JaeHoon's song heightened gradually. At the same time, the light became more intense as well. KangYoon could see the faint silver light amidst of the white light.

‘This is the part.’

KangYoon was nervous. This was the phrase where the silver light started increasing. KangYoon clasped his hand hoping that Kim JaeHoon would do well.

“My hot love – is washed away by the rain –”

The bass lowered and the drums became fancier. At the same time, Kim JaeHoon's voice became higher.

“Your promise to return – made me live on – but –”

White light had already filled every inch of the studio already. This was enough to enchant the audiences. However, KangYoon wanted more than that. The silver song was what he was waiting for.

And finally, the moment KangYoon waited for finally came.

“I'll get ready until then – it doesn't matter if you're late–”

This was the repeated bridge after the chorus. Kim JaeHoon seemed to have perfectly understood what KangYoon wanted and took his time raising his voice. The minute misalignment between his voice and the instruments now matched and the song turned silver.

‘This is it!’

KangYoon gripped his fists.

“Everything for you – the day you come back to me —”

Kim JaeHoon’s voice became higher and higher. He even ad-libbed higher than he had to. When he did, the white that had turned silver glowed brighter and filled the studio.

“Whoa....”

Moon ShinHak couldn’t even exclaim as he wanted to. He had already lost his calm. The producer and the staff had all of their gazes stolen away by him. The silver light enchanted all. Only KangYoon was not charmed by it.

“...A gap? Did such a thing happen?”

“I should get his signature later.”

While all of the staff members were dumbfounded by that scene, Kim JaeHoon’s song reached the climax.

“The love hidden deep in my heart — you are the one — I love _____.”

Kim JaeHoon’s song reached its climax.

The silver light had also reached its peak. The studio was already filled with light and notes that KangYoon couldn’t see in front of him. The band also used fancy techniques.

The song then slowly faded out. However, the silver light did not fade away and left behind a deep presence.

“.....”

“.....”

No one reacted. To be exact, no one could react.

A moment of silence passed. Then....

Clap, clap, clap clap clap.

All of the staff started applauding. It was their appreciation to Kim JaeHoon for letting them listen to a great song.

“Thank you.”

Kim JaeHoon did a 90-degree bow politely. The camera caught him doing this.

“...This looks awesome. This is like a huge jackpot.”

The producer was already imagining how to package this and broadcast it to the public. Today's shoot could definitely be considered the single best episode among the ones he did until now.

Kim JaeHoon's late night music show 'Hula', finished like that.

“Lee HeeYoon!”

JooAh ran towards HeeYoon who was waving from the grass. JooAh hugged HeeYoon strongly and jumped.

“HeeYoon! My girl! When did you become so pretty?”

“JooAh, look at you. Your butt is so round now.”

“...Hey, hey. It's actually padded.”

“What? It doesn't feel like it though.”

“That's a joke. Aren't I good?”

The two girls expressed their joy. Soon, the two headed to a nearby restaurant.

JooAh ordered a lot including steak. When HeeYoon became surprised, she made a 'v' with her fingers saying that she would

pay.

“Looks like you’re stressed out?”

“Phew, tell me about it. I’m always busy fighting those directors.”

JooAh insulted the directors for a long while. She didn’t hold back on her words and said that they were all haughty when they didn’t even know how the actual scene turned out. HeeYoon sighed after hearing that.

“So those old men have a lot of problems.”

“Ah, forget it. I at least can resist them. But the Eddios girls are really pitiful. They’re going around clubs, but they don’t have any intentions on calling them back to Korea.... Why are they all like this?”

Even in JooAh’s eyes, the directors had a lot of problems. They looked as though they weren’t thinking about their actions at all. To be exact, they looked as though they were more sensitive to their own profits rather than the profits of the company as a whole. She was worried that the image of MG Entertainment would fall like a toppling tower at this rate. However, she switched topics saying that such a topic would just cause headaches.

“Is KangYoon-oppa doing well?”

“My brother? He’s doing well.”

“He’s doing well as an arrangement composer. Oh yeah, HeeYoon. Do me a song.”

“A song? Are you going to do an album?”

“Not yet. Later.”

“Sure. I’ll force you even if you don’t want it so don’t worry about that.”

“Hahaha, I’ll judge you.”

The two girls kept talking away for a long time.

Two weeks after the recording of the late night music show 'Hula'.

The program was broadcasted. Although it was a late-night show, KTS (The TV station) leaked that Kim JaeHoon was going to appear and gathered everyone's attention. Moreover, articles appeared on the internet as well as on hot search words list. This was a result of KangYoon's business. Kim JaeHoon's name value also played a role.

Yoo SungGyum was a fan of Kim JaeHoon. As soon as he saw that Kim JaeHoon was going to appear on KTS's 'Hula', he decided to watch the main episode.

And 30 minutes past midnight arrived. He turned on the TV and clad himself in his blanket.

– Hello? I'm Moon ShinHak. Today....

The TV introduced Moon ShinHak and some short commentary from him. Then, Kim JaeHoon appeared after a bit of time. The band had appeared on the camera as well.

'White Moonlight? So, the session is a band.'

After a comment that the singer and the band were from the same company, they talked about more recent matters for a little while. After a short conversation, Kim JaeHoon's song began. This was the moment he was waiting for. Yoo SungGyum perked his ears.

– I will not – love –

Kim JaeHoon's voice was as good as ever. The 4 year-gap, 2 years of conflict with his former company as well as the 2 years in the military – looked as though it had not happened. Yoo SungGyum unintentionally waved around in his blanket.

Every one of them was a famous song. There were some of Kim JaeHoon's own songs, and some English songs as well. Kim JaeHoon's unique low voice was so cool as he sang those songs. A perfect voice – it was definitely worthy of being called that.

And then....

– This time, I've prepared 'Promise Again'.

This was the song that put Kim JaeHoon up to the top. Yoo SungGyun rejoiced inwardly. Finally, finally!

The piano accompaniment flowed out and Kim JaeHoon's voice drenched his ears.

– The meaning behind the tears in my eyes – I consoled myself that it was rain – It was as good as ever. Yoo SungGyun exclaimed. He felt as though he was about to shout in joy. The song flowed on and his heart became more fulfilled.

-Your promise to return – made me live on – but – He felt heightened as the song continued. The accompaniment waved and his heart also waved. However, the true wave started at that moment.

– I'll get ready until then – It doesn't matter if you're late – Kim JaeHoon's voice leisurely rose and beat his heart strongly. This felt completely different from before. His ears trembled and he felt goosebumps all over his body. A good song now came to him as something completely different. It felt as though an electric shock had passed through him.

He couldn't get a hold of himself, and the song reached its peak.

– The love hidden deep in my heart — you are the one — I love

———

It felt as though everything burst out at once. All the hindrances crumbled as though a dam was broken through. Kim JaeHoon's low yet refreshing voice pierce through him completely.

The song ended, and even though commentary resumed, Yoo SungGyum couldn't get a hold of himself.

‘This..., this.... What is.....!’

Tonight, Yoo SungGyum was met with a great song.

– Kim JaeHoon bursts out with emotional. Music show Hula was....

– Those four gap years have done nothing to him. Kim JaeHoon, when is his comeback?

– Will he cry the hearts of women? Kim JaeHoon's experiences...

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KangYoon closed the internet. The day after the broadcast, the internet's top search word was already Kim JaeHoon. Not because of his conflicts with his previous company, but purely because of his song.

Lee HyunJi smiled at the good results.

“Are we a step forward now?”

“Yes. We can start now.”

KangYoon replied with a deep sigh.

There was a 4-year gap, but Kim JaeHoon is still as good as ever. No, he became stronger!

They could appeal this point through Hula this time. It was a great success.

“Leave the PR to me. I already have the SNS down.”

“You're really reassuring.”

Thanks to Lee HyunJi, KangYoon could work on his own work

more comfortably. A partner who worked without having to tell her what to do was a great partner.

“Wait a minute. Is this JaeHoon’s schedule?”

“Yes.”

“Haa....”

But Lee HyunJi made a confused expression after looking at Kim JaeHoon’s schedule.

“Is, is this fine? I think he might fall ill.”

“Shouldn’t we get our investment? He only needs to work hard for three months.”

“Pfft.”

Lee HyunJi covered her face and laughed.

Speaking of the devil, Kim JaeHoon opened the door and entered. Due to the effects of the TV programme yesterday, he looked very bright.

“Hello.”

“Hello, Mr. JaeHoon.”

“You’re here.”

They greeted each other, and the three gathered around.

“Here’s your schedule.”

Kim JaeHoon received his schedule.

“...What the!”

Kim JaeHoon almost screamed after looking at his schedule.

“W... wait. This... is this really... humanly possible?”

“We’ll try. Don’t worry. I’ll be going with you.”

“Th.... That’s not the problem... the number of events here....”

Kim JaeHoon shivered after looking at the extremely long list of

events on his schedule. However, KangYoon smirked and replied.

“I told you last time. You won’t have any time to rest.”

“But this is still....”

“I don’t speak lies.”

“.....”

Kim JaeHoon felt the fright of KangYoon properly.

Like that the two’s hot(?) spring began.